



Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Putting Healthy Food Within Reach

Community Partner Outreach Toolkit



FOREWORD

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Please refer to www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach for the latest statistics and program updates. The toolkit is also available online at this Web site and will be updated as needed.



COMMUNITY TOOLKIT

U.S. Department of Agriculture
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STATE TOOLKIT

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HOW TO MILK THIS TOOLKIT

FOR ALL IT'S WORTH!



INTRODUCTION

THE BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION IN SNAP

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is an investment in our future. It offers nutrition benefits to participating clients, supports work, and provides economic benefits to communities. However, too many low-income people who are eligible for the program do not participate and thus forgo nutrition assistance that could stretch their food dollars at the grocery store. Their communities lose out on the benefits provided by new SNAP dollars flowing into local economies.

In fiscal year 2007, only 66 percent¹ (*All footnotes are research citations. You can find them in the “Resource” section at the end of this toolkit.*) of those eligible for SNAP benefits participated. The most common reason eligible people do not participate is because they do not realize they may be eligible. Others choose not to apply because of myths or misunderstandings about SNAP benefits or because of stigma that continues to persist. Others make a cost-benefit decision that the time involved in applying for benefits is not worth the expected return. Some do not want to accept government assistance. For specific populations, there may be additional compounding factors, such as language barriers for legal immigrants, or time and transportation barriers for the working poor. Seniors may not understand the nature of the program and choose not to apply for benefits, thinking children or families need the help more.

Outreach and education are powerful tools in overcoming barriers to SNAP participation. Even a small increase in SNAP participation can have a substantial impact. If the national participation rate rose 5 percentage points, 1.9 million more low-income people would have an additional \$1.3 billion in benefits per year to use to purchase healthy food and \$2.5 billion total in new economic activity would be generated nationwide.

“ SNAP is the first line of defense against hunger in our community. Making sure low-income people receive SNAP benefits accomplishes many things. First and most importantly, people get fed. Second, community and faith-based organizations such as ours are relieved of having to provide a higher level of food assistance. Third, the local grocers do business with customers that they may not have otherwise. And fourth, we are all healthier and happier.”

BILL BOLLING
Executive Director
 Atlanta Community Food Bank
 Atlanta, Georgia

Why does increasing participation in SNAP make sense for your community?

SNAP GENERATES ECONOMIC ACTIVITY.

SNAP brings Federal dollars into communities in the form of benefits which are redeemed by SNAP participants at local stores. These benefits ripple throughout the economies of the community, State, and Nation. For example:

- Every \$5 in new SNAP benefits generates up to \$9.20 in community spending.²
- Every additional dollar's worth of SNAP benefits generates 17 to 47 cents of new spending on food.³
- On average, \$1 billion of retail food demand by SNAP recipients generates 3,300 farm jobs.⁴



“A successful SNAP redemption program probably means that we are successfully servicing the needs of our community. By being able to meet our customers’ needs during a particular time in their lives, we are often able to establish a relationship that outlives the time a person is eligible for SNAP benefits. In that case we benefit from that customer both now and in the future. SNAP redemption is a way to get your best customer in the front door and to establish a long-term relationship with that customer.”

GEORGE MATICS
Purchasing Director
Cardenas Markets, Inc.
Ontario, California

“To reach common ground, we need to go to higher ground. Together with our business and government leaders, we can build community and economic prosperity for all.”

DANIELLA LEVINE
Executive Director
Human Service Coalition
Miami, Florida

In fiscal year 2009, the average monthly SNAP benefit per household was approximately \$275.⁵ These benefits, funded by Federal dollars, create business when they are redeemed at your local food retailers. Eighty-six percent of benefits, totaling \$25 billion, were redeemed at the nation’s 35,000 supermarkets. The remaining benefits, totaling \$3.6 billion, contribute to the viability of 121,000 other firms which include grocery stores, convenience stores, combination stores, farmer’s markets, and other retail food stores; plus wholesalers and meal services.⁶

SNAP benefits are positively and significantly related to household food expenditures.⁷ Although estimates of the impact vary, studies have shown that a \$1 increase in the value of SNAP benefits of a typical recipient household leads to additional food expenditures of between 17 and 47 cents.⁸ SNAP recipients spend more dollars on food at local retailers in communities than eligible nonparticipants.

SNAP benefits can be used at authorized farmers markets that sell local produce. This provides additional customers for local farmers and provides SNAP recipients access to healthy, locally grown fruits and vegetables that might otherwise be unavailable to them.

SNAP SUPPORTS WORK AND HELPS LOW-INCOME PEOPLE MAKE THE TRANSITION TO SELF-SUFFICIENCY.

More than 29 percent of SNAP households had earnings in 2008 and 40 percent of all SNAP participants lived in a household with earnings.⁹ Employees whose nutrition needs are met at home may be healthier and thus may take fewer sick days for themselves or their children. Employees may stay longer with companies that care about them by sharing information about SNAP benefits and its importance as a work support.

SNAP helps families become financially stable and make the transition to self-sufficiency, getting them through the tough times. Half of all new participants will leave the program within nine months.¹⁰

SNAP benefits are a work support. SNAP benefits help those leaving the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program and transitioning to work by supplementing their food budgets so that they can stay independent and work toward self-sufficiency.¹¹ Since SNAP benefits decrease only by 24 to 36 cents for every additional dollar of earnings, SNAP recipients have incentives to work since they will be better off working rather than receiving SNAP benefits alone.¹²



SNAP HELPS LOW-INCOME FAMILIES MAKE HEALTHY FOOD CHOICES AND PUT MORE NUTRITIOUS FOOD ON THE TABLE.

Dietary patterns among low-income people, as well as those of the general public, indicate an excessive consumption of calories, unhealthy fats and sugars, while fruit, vegetable and whole grain intakes are modest.¹³ These poor eating habits contribute to making overweight and obesity a national health problem. In addition to the toll on personal health, this “epidemic” of obesity has economic implications as well. Obesity-attributable medical expenditures in the United States reached \$75 billion in 2003. Taxpayers financed about half of these costs through Medicare and Medicaid.¹⁴

However, research shows that low-income households participating in SNAP have access to more food energy, protein, and a broad array of essential vitamins and minerals in their home food supply compared to eligible nonparticipants.¹⁵ Nationwide, if there were a 5 percentage point increase in the SNAP participation rate, an additional 1.9 million low-income people would reap the nutrition benefits of SNAP. SNAP also helps participants manage their food resources more wisely through SNAP nutrition education. States may exercise the option to provide targeted nutrition education activities or social marketing campaigns designed to help persons eligible for SNAP make healthier food choices and pursue active lifestyles.

Because SNAP benefits are available to most low-income households with few resources, regardless of age, disability status, or family structure, SNAP households are a diverse group. Nine percent of SNAP recipients are aged 60 or older.¹⁶ For the elderly, a particularly vulnerable and underserved population, participation in SNAP and other food assistance programs can help improve nutritional status and well-being and increase independence. Nearly half of SNAP participants are children.¹⁷ Children who are well nourished may have better attendance at school and, once there, may be more focused on learning.

COMBINED EFFORTS ARE NEEDED

SNAP is the cornerstone of the Nation’s nutrition safety net, providing assistance to those who qualify. It helps relieve pressure on emergency food providers, enabling them to provide more assistance to those who do not qualify for SNAP benefits. Because of the nutrition benefits to participants and the economic benefits to the Nation and to States and communities, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has made increasing participation in SNAP a priority. Increasing participation in SNAP requires the combined efforts of National, State, and local public leaders as well as nonprofit community agencies, employers, and anyone else who touches the lives of potentially eligible people.

“The additional support which [SNAP benefits] provide to needy individuals is readily seen in our stores that serve customers in low-income areas. This benefit not only helps those who require some additional assistance in making ends meet, but is also an aid to the supermarkets making a commitment to serving economically challenged communities. Our partnership with nonprofit organizations in outreaching to potential participants speaks to Pathmark’s commitment to this important program.”

RICH SAVNER
Director of
Public Affairs and
Government Relations
 Pathmark Stores, Inc.
 Carteret, New Jersey

The rest of this “Introduction” section provides an explanation of the Toolkit, an overview of SNAP, SNAP question-and-answer sheets (Q&As), talking points, information about nutrition education providers, and other background materials.



ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

Why was this toolkit developed?

We all have a common goal: to improve the ability of low-income people to access nutritious food by participating in SNAP. The information and materials in this toolkit will help you share information about SNAP benefits with those who are eligible but not participating. They will also help you let potential partners, government officials, and the public know how SNAP participation helps the local economy and addresses the national health problem of obesity.

What is SNAP outreach?

SNAP outreach is providing information or assistance to someone who might be eligible for SNAP. The goals of SNAP outreach are to help people make an informed decision about whether to apply for the program, and ultimately to increase participation by eligible individuals and families.

What is in the toolkit?

This toolkit includes information on:

- SNAP
- Maximizing your outreach efforts through developing partnerships coordinating local events and working with your local SNAP office
- Publicizing your outreach through media relations and optimized press releases
- Placing public service announcements (PSAs) and paid advertising
- Resources

Each section features easy-to-follow instructions, helpful hints, and useful materials (such as PSA scripts, frequently asked questions, and suggested responses). We also have included samples and templates (for letters, calendar listings, etc.) that you can customize with local and State specifics and enhance with information about your organization.

How do I use the toolkit?

The materials in this toolkit show a number of outreach possibilities and offer your organization the flexibility to pick and choose pieces that work for your specific needs. Throughout the toolkit there are tip sheets that you can duplicate for yourself and your colleagues. Do not worry if your organization has limited resources and staff. You do not have to conduct every one of these activities or invest a lot of time in each one. Do what works best for you and your community.

TARGET POPULATIONS

Findings show that, in addition to the general low-income audience, there are distinct groups that are significantly underrepresented in accessing SNAP benefits. The national outreach campaign is focused on reaching:

GENERAL LOW-INCOME:

Eligible, nonparticipating individuals and families;

WORKING POOR: Employed individuals and families who may not understand that even though they work, they still might qualify;

ELDERLY: People 60 years old or older who may have misunderstandings about the process and potential benefits; and

LEGAL IMMIGRANTS*:

Immigrants may misunderstand eligibility requirements related to citizenship.

** There are other immigrant groups that could benefit from this educational effort. You may want to connect with local SNAP eligibility workers in your community to identify other distinct groups to target. Some FNS outreach materials are available in 35 languages and can be downloaded from the FNS Web site. Refer to the "Resources" section of this toolkit.*



How do I get started with outreach?

The best way to begin is to ask other organizations in your community if they are currently conducting a SNAP outreach project or if they have a resource guide, task force, or advisory group. Your local SNAP office is a good starting point for such a discussion. That office can share State and local information and may also have informational materials to add to your effort. By working together, you will be able to further your goals and avoid duplication.

As you start your project, be sure to keep local SNAP offices informed of your activities. Explore ways of working together to reduce application barriers — the best outreach efforts will not work if people run into barriers at the SNAP office. Extended office hours, child care areas in waiting rooms, and shorter applications are some examples of how SNAP offices can increase accessibility. Potential roadblocks such as crowded offices, long waiting lines, or repeated visits to the SNAP office may counter your efforts to educate potential applicants about SNAP and prepare them for certification interviews.

Are funds available to help pay for my outreach project?

One potential way to pay for part of your outreach project is to contact your State SNAP agency about an optional State outreach plan. Outreach is an allowable administrative cost for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for State SNAP agencies. States can receive 50 percent reimbursement from the Federal Government for necessary, reasonable, and allowable outreach expenditures. Your State agency has the option of contracting outreach activities to community and faith-based organizations under a State outreach plan. If a State chooses to do this, State contracting rules apply.

Before contacting your State agency, prepare your business case as to why outreach activities should be contracted to your organization. Be ready to provide your State agency with the following information, at a minimum:

- Background information about your organization
- Target group(s) for the outreach project
- Need in your community for the project
- Services that you will provide
- Funding you will contribute, if any
- Donated time

To learn more about SNAP outreach activities that can be contracted by States, review the FNS guidance to States. This guidance includes examples of allowable and nonallowable outreach activities and the fiscal policies for State plans. Also outlined in the guidance are the provisions under which waivers are granted to States to use private, third-party donations as their share of the cost. This information is located at www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/stateplan.htm.



Can I provide nutrition education too?

Similar to outreach, nutrition education is an allowable administrative cost for SNAP. States can receive 50 percent reimbursement from the Federal Government for necessary, reasonable, and allowable SNAP nutrition education expenditures. Almost all States have optional nutrition education plans in place. If you are interested in offering nutrition education to your clients, a good first step is to make your interest known to State SNAP officials and the nutrition education cooperators who are participating in the nutrition education plan for your State. For a list of nutrition education cooperators, go to SNAP Nutrition Connection Web site at www.nal.usda.gov/foodstamp/Stategates/index.html.

What outreach is happening on a national level and how do we fit in?

USDA has a nationwide effort to educate and inform eligible nonparticipants — with special emphasis on working poor, elderly, and immigrants — about SNAP.

The primary goals of the campaign are to increase enrollment in SNAP and to reinforce its role as a nutrition assistance program. The objectives of the education effort were developed with advice and input from many local SNAP offices and partners. These objectives are to:

- Expand awareness of SNAP as a nutrition assistance and work support program;
- Inform eligible, unenrolled people about where and how they can apply; and
- Ensure that people who are eligible to enroll have reasonable access and can participate with dignity and respect.

This effort, designed to raise awareness of and change beliefs about SNAP, includes promotion of a national toll-free information line (1-800-221-5689) through a variety of paid radio advertisements in English and Spanish. These advertisements run on stations in major population centers, and in areas with particularly large numbers of eligible but unenrolled populations. Over a five year period 2003–2008, markets carrying ads with the SNAP National Hotline number averaged a 273 percent increase in information packets. (Calls could not be tracked in the areas where the ads offer a local toll-free number rather than the national one.)

What if I have more questions?

If you have any questions about this toolkit, or about how to conduct outreach to increase local enrollment in SNAP, please e-mail us at fspoutreach@fns.usda.gov or refer to the FNS Web site www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach.

You may also wish to tap the SNAP Outreach Coalition, a Web-based network of national antihunger advocacy groups and partner organizations, for helpful insight about ways to reach SNAP target audiences. Details about this group can be found in the “Resources” section under “General SNAP Outreach Resources”, or by visiting www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/about.htm.

Whether you work at a food bank, at a community or faith-based organization, or with the State or county government, you are an important part of this national effort to inform low-income people across the country about how they and their families can eat right, even when money's tight. The outreach you conduct on a local level is a vital part of the national campaign.



OVERVIEW OF SNAP PROGRAM

NUTRITION ASSISTANCE



SNAP is the cornerstone of the Federal nutrition assistance safety net, serving as the first line of defense against hunger. SNAP provides much-needed nutrition support to millions of low-income people. Nearly half of them are children.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS



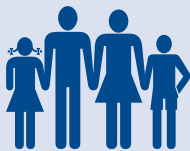
Not only does SNAP help individuals and families when money's tight, but your State and local community also benefit. The average SNAP benefit per person is about \$101 per month (fiscal year 2008 data), which is spent in local grocery stores. In fact, every \$5 in new Federal SNAP benefits generates up to double the amount in local economic activity. Also, every additional dollar in SNAP benefits generates 17 to 47 cents of new spending on food.

ELECTRONIC ISSUANCE



In June 2004, SNAP completed a transformation from paper coupons to an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card. Participants receive a plastic EBT card (similar to a bank debit card) with the dollar amount for which they are eligible each month. There is evidence that EBT also decreases fraudulent use of SNAP benefits.

UNDERSERVED POPULATION



Millions of low-income people are not accessing the nutrition benefits for which they qualify. To be effective, it is important that our national and local outreach efforts counter myths about SNAP among those who think they are not eligible or have beliefs that discourage them from enrolling.



MYTH

TRUTH

FOUR COMMON SNAP MYTHS HEARD FROM POTENTIAL APPLICANTS

“SNAP is a welfare program.”

SNAP is a nutrition assistance program designed to help individuals and families buy nutritious food when money’s tight.

“Some people receive only \$10 a month in SNAP benefits.”

While some receive \$10, the average SNAP benefit per person is about \$101 per month (fiscal year 2008 data).

“You cannot get SNAP benefits if you have a job.”

Individuals may work and still have income low enough to receive SNAP benefits. In fact, nearly 40 percent of SNAP households had earnings in 2008.

“Other people need SNAP benefits more than I do.”

By receiving SNAP benefits, you are not taking benefits away from another person. Everyone who applies and is determined to be eligible by the State/local eligibility worker will get SNAP benefits.

FOUR COMMON SNAP MYTHS HEARD FROM ELIGIBILITY WORKERS

“Outreach could mean more quality control errors.”

The number of low-income people participating in SNAP is growing; however, the error rate is at an all-time low.

“Community workers cannot prescreen for eligibility or help gather verification documents.”

Community groups can prescreen clients using the FNS prescreening tool known as “Step 1” (or the State prescreening tool, if one exists). Additionally, they can help fill out application forms, gather verification information, etc. However, the responsibility for the actual certification of households for program benefits remains with SNAP staff.

“Certification interviews must be held at local SNAP offices.”

Local SNAP offices can take applications or certify households for benefits at remote locations such as food bank and grocery stores. Local offices may offer telephone interviews when appropriate.

“Outreach will increase my workload.”

Community workers help potential applicants gather appropriate verification documents so that clients are better prepared for the interview and bring the proper paperwork.



SNAP FACT SHEET

SNAP is the first line of defense against hunger. On average, it helps more than 28 million (fiscal year 2008 data) low-income people buy nutritious food each month and make healthy food choices within a limited budget. Eating healthier foods helps low-income people and their families stay well and have the energy they need for today's active lifestyles.

To apply for SNAP benefits, a person must go through the local SNAP office. If it is not possible to get to the office, a person may apply by telephone or make an appointment for another time or place. Any knowledgeable adult in the family can initiate an application, or the household may designate an "authorized representative" to apply for them. Outreach providers are encouraged to check out the broad-based categorical eligibility requirements for further information (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/rules/Memo/2010/121809.pdf>).

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must have INCOMES under certain levels, based on household size. A household is defined as people who live together and eat meals together.

Applicants may have RESOURCES, but they must be less than a certain level:

- \$2,000 for most households
- \$3,000 for a household with an elderly person (age 60 or older) or disabled person
- Most States exempt one or more vehicles from household resources
- A household's home does not count as a resource

An immigrant is eligible to apply for SNAP benefits if he/she:

- Has been in the United States as a legal resident for five years
- Is a legal immigrant child (not born in the United States)
- Has earned, or can be credited with, 40 quarters of work
- Is a refugee or asylee
- Has a military connection
- Is a member of certain Indian tribes

NOTE: A child born in the United States or a legal immigrant child is eligible for SNAP benefits, even if other household members are not eligible because of their immigration status.

Please check with your local SNAP office for more information about these eligibility requirements.



The amount of the SNAP benefit for each household takes into account the household's income, current living expenses, and resources.

SNAP outreach is critical to reaching those low-income people who are not aware that they may be eligible for, or do not know how to apply for, program benefits. The Food and Nutrition Service has several efforts under way to help with local outreach:

TOOLS AVAILABLE

A prescreening eligibility tool, written at the 6th grade level in both English and Spanish, is available for anyone with Internet access. The tool helps people learn if they are eligible and how much they might receive in monthly benefits. It can be found at www.snap-step1.usda.gov/fns/

A toll-free information line (1-800-221-5689) is available in Spanish and English.

Free educational posters and flyers in Spanish and English can be ordered at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/default.htm>.

Five basic documents in 35 languages can be found online at www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/translations.htm

A national SNAP Outreach Coalition brings together national and local organizations interested in SNAP outreach and helps to empower these groups to do more and better outreach.

The FSOC listserv was developed to be a communication mechanism for those interested in outreach at the local, State, and national levels, and to share ideas among groups. To join, send an e-mail to outreach.coalition@fns.usda.gov.

Certified households receive their benefits through a debit card called an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card. EBT cardholder accounts are credited monthly, and SNAP recipients spend their benefits by using the card to buy eligible food in authorized retail food stores. Only food and certain food preparation items can be purchased with SNAP benefits.



SNAP FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

What is SNAP?

SNAP is a nutrition assistance program that helps low-income families and individuals purchase nutritious, healthy food. It is the cornerstone of the Nation's nutrition assistance safety net. The U.S. Department of Agriculture oversees SNAP at the Federal level through its Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). State agencies administer the program at State and local levels. Their responsibilities include determining eligibility and distributing benefits.

Who is eligible to receive SNAP benefits?

Anyone who meets the eligibility requirements can get SNAP benefits. Household income and other resources have to be under certain limits and are reviewed. The program allows for certain deductions like housing costs, child support, medical expenses, or child-care costs. A household may also have up to \$2,000 in assets. Households with a member age 60 or older—or a disabled member—may have up to \$3,000 in assets. Assets that do not count toward eligibility requirements include: a home, a vehicle to carry a physically disabled member of a household, the fair market value of one vehicle (up to \$4,650; higher limits in most States), and the resources of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients. Specific details are outlined in the FNS-313 brochure at www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/general.htm.

Where can I go to find out if I'm eligible to receive SNAP benefits?

If you have access to a computer, you can quickly find out if you might qualify for SNAP benefits through the prescreening tool available on the USDA Web site, www.snap-step1.usda.gov/fns/. Local SNAP offices can provide information about eligibility, and USDA operates a toll-free number (1-800-221-5689) for people to call if they want to receive information about SNAP by mail. Most States also have a toll-free information/hotline number that can be found at www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/contact_info/hotlines.htm.

Some community organizations work closely with SNAP offices and can provide information on the application process.

WHAT IS THE EBT CARD?

All 50 States have made the transition from paper coupons to the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card. The EBT card is like a debit card and can be used at USDA-authorized grocery stores across the country. At the cash register, the customer or cashier swipes the EBT card through the card reader at the point of sale and the customer enters a personal identification number to secure the transaction. The system deducts the exact dollar amount of the purchase from the customer's EBT account and deposits it into the retailer's bank account. Once the SNAP EBT transaction is complete, a receipt shows the amount of the SNAP purchase and the amount of SNAP benefits remaining in the EBT account.



What are some of SNAP's benefits?

SNAP benefits provide much-needed help so that low-income people can put good, healthy food on the table. SNAP benefits help with the grocery bill. Households can use benefits to purchase breads, cereals, fruits and vegetables, meats, fish and poultry, and dairy products. Many States offer free nutrition education materials and programs for SNAP benefit recipients. [Localize here if your State offers materials and/or classes.]

SNAP benefits also help the local community. Each \$5 in new SNAP benefits generates up to twice that amount in economic activity for the community. Plus, SNAP benefits are funded with Federal dollars — so when everyone who is eligible for the program receives benefits, State and local economies also benefit.

Why is there a national SNAP outreach effort?

Currently, only about 66 percent of those eligible for SNAP benefits are enrolled. The goal of this national SNAP outreach effort is to raise awareness of SNAP eligibility and benefits. The campaign includes promoting a national toll-free information line (1-800-221-5689) (or State toll-free lines where available) through a variety of English and Spanish radio advertisements in major population centers and in areas with large numbers of eligible but unenrolled people.

Who is involved in SNAP outreach?

SNAP outreach is a community-wide effort enlisting the help of State and local SNAP offices, faith-based groups, food banks, and others. Together, these groups play an important role in helping low-income families learn about and access SNAP. Community groups can help in many ways. For example, they can distribute informational materials, conduct prescreening for program eligibility, provide application assistance and forms, and help gather verification documents.

A core group of national antihunger advocacy groups and other organizations are part of a group called the SNAP Outreach Coalition. The Coalition members also collaborate to promote the nutrition benefits of SNAP through outreach to local antihunger projects.



SNAP TALKING POINTS AND MESSAGES

Following are suggested talking points regarding SNAP. You are encouraged to localize this information with State or local SNAP data, or promote State-specific resources such as a toll-free SNAP information line or prescreening tool.

SNAP is the first line of defense against hunger.

- ✦ SNAP benefits provide much-needed temporary help with the grocery bill so that low-income people can put nutritious, healthy food on the table.
- ✦ Nearly half of those who receive SNAP benefits are children.

SNAP is a nutrition program that helps low-income families and individuals purchase nutritious, healthy food. It is the cornerstone of the Nation's nutrition assistance safety net.

- ✦ Low-income people get financial support to help with their grocery bills so they can buy fruits and vegetables, whole-grain foods, dairy products, and other healthy foods. In addition, many SNAP participants are offered free nutrition education materials and classes to help them make good purchasing choices and stretch their food dollars.

SNAP has made some fundamental changes in recent years that make it easier to:

- ✦ Find out about the program
 - * Individuals can call 1-800-221-5689 for a free information packet to learn more about SNAP and how to apply. Information is available in English and Spanish.
 - * Individuals can go to a Web site featuring a prescreening tool and, by answering a few simple questions, determine if they are eligible for SNAP benefits and how much they might receive. The Web site address is www.snap-step1.usda.gov/fns/.
- ✦ Apply for benefits
 - * FNS and States are working to simplify the application process.

✦ Shop for healthy food

- * There are no more paper coupons. Now, benefits are delivered with an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card that works like a debit card at the grocery store.

SNAP is a win-win for low-income people, local retailers, and local communities.

- ✦ Each \$5 in new SNAP benefits generates up to twice that amount in economic activity for the community.
- ✦ The average benefit per person is about \$101 a month (fiscal year 2008 data). That translates into money spent at local grocery stores.
- ✦ SNAP benefits are funded with Federal dollars. When everyone who is eligible for the program receives benefits, State and local economies also benefit.
- ✦ Research shows that low-income households participating in SNAP have access to more food energy, protein, and an array of essential vitamins and minerals in their home food supply compared to eligible nonparticipants.
- ✦ Since SNAP benefits help defray the costs of buying healthy foods, low-income people are less likely to have to make hard choices between eating right and paying for other essentials.

USDA and the antihunger community are working as partners to ensure that everyone who is eligible for SNAP knows about it and is able to access benefits.

- ✦ Many low-income people are not aware of their eligibility and how to apply, particularly those who are working, seniors, or legal immigrants.
- ✦ To ensure that everyone who is eligible knows about the benefits of the program, USDA is conducting a national media campaign.



SNAP QUESTIONS & SUGGESTED ANSWERS FOR PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS AND SPOKESPERSONS

Why are Questions and Answers (Q&As) important? Q&As are anticipated questions and suggested answers that program administrators and outreach spokespeople can study to help get ready for media interviews or other public speaking. You might receive these questions from the media, the public, or others.

Here are some examples of Q&As about SNAP outreach:

Why are you encouraging people to enroll in SNAP?

SNAP is a nutrition assistance program that helps low-income people put healthy food on the table. SNAP supplements the food budgets of low-income people who are having a tough time paying for food for themselves or their families. Children have important nutritional needs and they make up about half of those currently receiving SNAP benefits. We want everyone who is eligible to have the opportunity to apply for benefits so that they can have access to healthier diets. Our outreach efforts are specially targeted to people who are least likely to understand that they may be eligible: elderly persons, immigrants, and working poor.

Why are you encouraging the use of SNAP benefits when application numbers are increasing already?

Yes, enrollment numbers are increasing. However, there are still many people who need help. Currently, in an average month, more than 13 million eligible households are NOT receiving SNAP benefits. This is usually because they do not think they qualify, or think there are people in greater need of the benefits. We want to reach out to those people, encourage them to get prescreened, and, if appropriate, apply for SNAP benefits so they can get help with their grocery bills. SNAP benefits are not only good for low-income people; they also help the local economy.

Are the financial benefits worth the effort to enroll?

SNAP benefits are not intended to be the only means of paying the grocery bill, but they do help low-income people purchase healthier food items, such as fruits and vegetables. Monthly benefits vary based on income and household size. On average, an eligible person receives around \$101 per month (fiscal year 2008 data). This additional support will help low-income households purchase nutritious foods for a healthy diet.

Can people purchase whatever they want with their SNAP benefits?

SNAP benefits are intended to supplement a household's grocery budgets and help them purchase healthier foods. Households can use SNAP benefits to purchase a wide range of food items. Participants are encouraged to use their SNAP benefits wisely to maximize their nutrition impact and economic value. To that end, they are encouraged to buy nutrient-dense foods such as whole-grain bread and cereals; fruits and vegetables; lowfat meats, fish, and poultry and milk products. Other items that can be purchased with SNAP benefits are seeds and plants that produce food. Nonfood items cannot be bought with SNAP benefits.



I have heard that enrolling in SNAP is difficult. What does it involve?

USDA and State and local agencies that administer SNAP are working to improve the application process by simplifying forms, offering extended office hours, and, in some instances, allowing online applications. Anyone can check to see if they might qualify for benefits through an online prescreening process at www.snap-step1.usda.gov/fns/.

Anyone interested in finding out more about how to apply should call 1-800-221-5689 for information. [Localize this information if your State or community has a toll-free number.]

How long does it take to start receiving benefits?

If you are in special need because of very low income, you may receive benefits within 7 days, if eligible. However, for others, it may take up to 30 days to receive benefits. At the time of application, an eligibility worker will give applicants this type of information.

What measures are taken to prevent SNAP fraud?

USDA is committed to integrity in all of its nutrition assistance programs. USDA has taken several steps to make it easier to identify and punish those who misuse SNAP benefits. Retailers who violate program rules, recipients who try to obtain their benefits based on false information, or recipients who sell their benefits can be removed from the program, fined, and even jailed. Also, with the introduction of the electronic benefit card (EBT), which works much like a debit card at a grocery store, the USDA is better able to track and deter fraud.

Doesn't the EBT card make it easier for people to abuse the system?

No. The EBT card makes it more difficult for people to commit SNAP fraud. EBT eliminates paper food stamps and creates an electronic record for each transaction, making fraud easier to detect. Not only does the EBT card cut down on SNAP abuse, but it also reduces the stigma some people associate with receiving SNAP benefits.

Why are you advertising a free benefit for poor people?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is a nutrition program that helps low-income people have better diets, and better eating can mean better health. There are many people who are eligible for SNAP benefits but are not participating in the program. SNAP is a win-win for local retailers and local communities. Each \$5 in new SNAP benefits generates up to twice that amount in economic activity for the community. Average SNAP benefits are about \$101 a month per person (fiscal year 2008 data), translating to money spent in local grocery stores. Everyone wins when eligible people take advantage of benefits to which they are entitled.



COLLABORATING WITH SNAP-ED PROVIDERS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Many communities have a wealth of information available to help your organization promote the nutrition benefits of SNAP. Focusing on nutrition can help your organization get the attention of individuals who might not be inclined to pick up SNAP informational materials. This gives your organization an opportunity to explain SNAP as a nutrition assistance program to potential applicants as well as employers, community leaders, and others, who might still associate SNAP with welfare programs. Learn more about SNAP nutrition education providers in your community and what role each organization can play to increase SNAP participation.

What is the goal of SNAP Nutrition Education?

The goal of the SNAP is to improve the likelihood that persons eligible for SNAP will make healthy food choices within their limited budget and choose active lifestyles, as the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the USDA Food Guidance System (MyPyramid) recommend.

Why should my organization consider collaborating with SNAP Nutrition Education providers?

Outreach and SNAP Nutrition Education can work together to communicate messages about how SNAP can help needy families obtain healthy foods. The possibility of better nutrition can help generate interest in SNAP among potentially eligible persons as well as community workers serving that population. SNAP Nutrition Education providers have conducted needs assessments to identify which nutrition messages to promote and strategies for communicating these messages to SNAP-eligible population. They also have access to nutrition education materials that are consistent with national nutrition initiatives. By working together, outreach and nutrition education can communicate accurate, unified, and reinforcing messages that have a more powerful reach.

FNS recently developed a series of nutrition education and promotion materials targeting mothers entitled Loving Your Family, Feeding their Future: Nutrition Education Through the Food Stamp Program. The nutrition education messages are based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2005. These nutrition education messages address the needs of English and Spanish speaking mothers with limited literacy skills. This series of education materials includes an educator's handbook, four discussion sessions with accompanying participant handouts, participant guidebook, and an online educator's learning module with a flash video component. These materials were developed primarily for SNAP Nutrition Education participants, however, they can be used in other nutrition education settings with similar target audiences such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program. Educators can access Loving Your Family... materials at <http://snap.nal.usda.gov>.



WHERE CAN I GO TO LEARN MORE ABOUT SNAP NUTRITION EDUCATION?

States often provide nutrition education to SNAP participants through contracts with the Cooperative Extension System, State Nutrition Networks, public health departments, and other organizations.

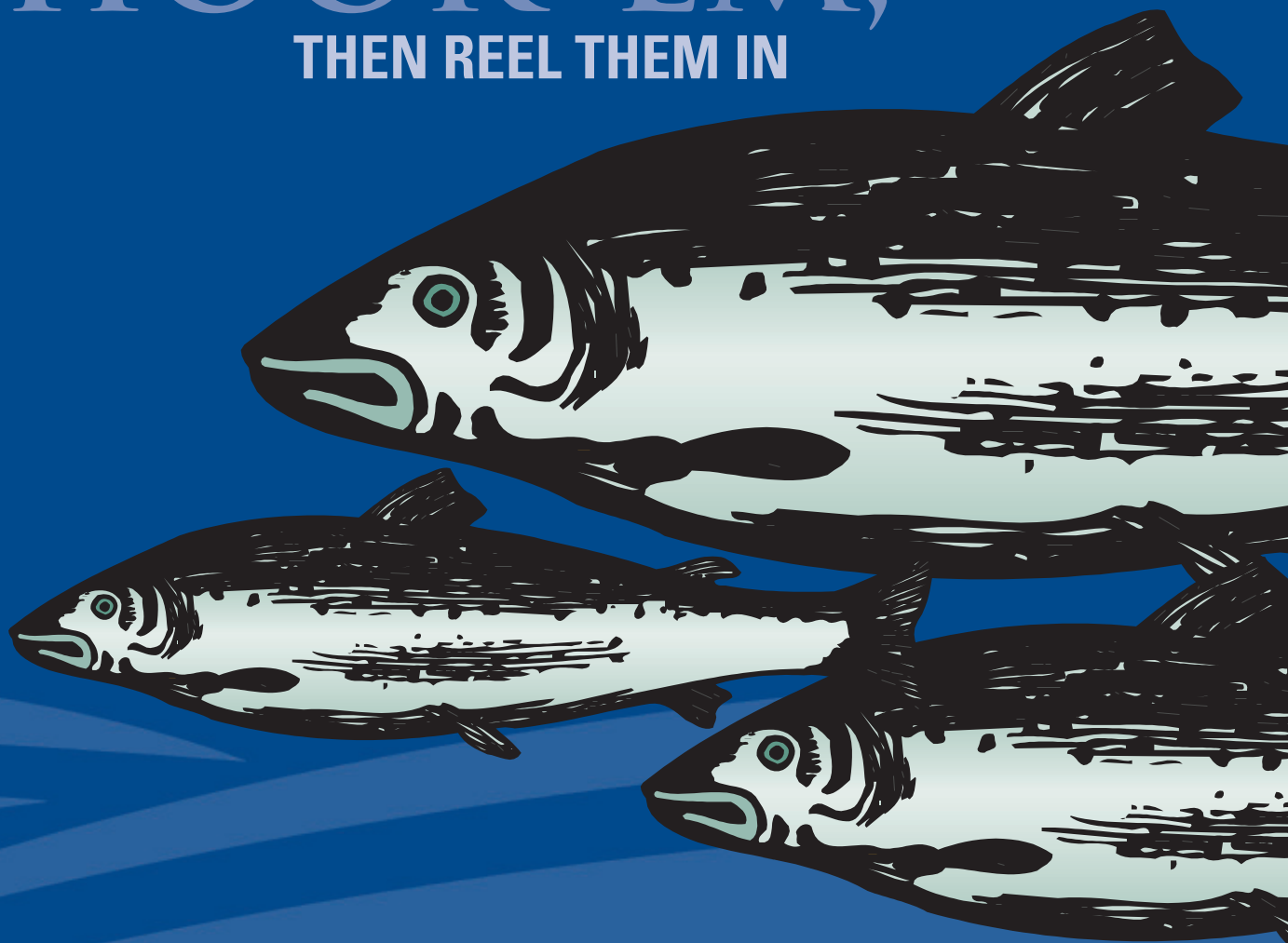
SNAP Nutrition Connection, a project of the USDA Food and Nutrition Service and the National Agricultural Library, maintains a list of State SNAP Nutrition Education providers. You can access it online at www.nal.usda.gov/ request a print copy by phone at 301-504-5719, or e-mail FSNC@nal.usda.gov.

You can also contact your State or local SNAP offices for information on SNAP Nutrition Education activities in your area.



2

HOOK 'EM, THEN REEL THEM IN



DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING PARTNERSHIPS

How can partnerships help my organization with outreach?

Although you can conduct Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) outreach alone, your efforts will be more successful if you work with like-minded organizations. Since only local SNAP offices can certify clients for benefits, one of your most critical partners is your local SNAP office.

Partnerships with other groups can expand your ability to get the word out about SNAP benefits by:

- Providing new avenues of communication;
- Increasing the visibility and credibility of your message through a unified community voice;
- Leveraging your limited resources, and making sure your efforts are not duplicative.

Here is what you will find in this section:



KEYS TO:

Partnership Development

- ➔ Ten steps for establishing a partnership;
- ➔ Useful template materials that can be tailored for local needs; and
- ➔ Examples of partnership materials.

What if I have questions about outreach and partnerships?

Go to the SNAP Web site at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/default.htm>. There you will find free materials, such as posters, brochures and flyers, to order as well as general information about outreach, outreach strategies, and promising practices.

Learn from your colleagues by joining the SNAP Outreach Coalition, a nationwide network of advocacy groups and partner organizations that works to promote the health and nutrition benefits of SNAP. Formed in 2003, this core group of national food banks, community and faith-based groups, and service organizations works together to end hunger and improve nutrition.

For more information about the Coalition, please visit the Web site at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/about.htm>. You also will find a listing of national partners that may have a local chapter with which you can collaborate.

What are the steps for developing and maintaining a partnership?

You can establish a partnership by following 10 simple steps. These steps may also be helpful if you are approached by another community organization or a local SNAP office seeking a partnership with you.



10 STEPS TO DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING A PARTNERSHIP

- 1 | Inform your local SNAP office
- 2 | Select a target audience
- 3 | Determine which partners will effectively reach the target audience
- 4 | Research and get prepared
- 5 | Contact your prospective partners
- 6 | Jointly establish your outreach plan
- 7 | Confirm the partnership roles and responsibilities
- 8 | Stay in touch with your partners
- 9 | Evaluate your partnership
- 10 | Share your success

STEP 1 | INFORM YOUR LOCAL SNAP OFFICE

One of your most important partners is your local SNAP office. You may need to work through these 10 steps with your local SNAP office even before you work through them with other potential partners. It is important to keep the SNAP office informed and updated as you move forward with your plans with other partners.

There are several important reasons to inform your local office at an early stage in your planning:

- Only a local SNAP office can certify eligible participants. Local offices need to know to expect new customers as a result of your outreach so they can adequately prepare.
- The local office may want to assess its customer service procedures before the partnership launches as another way to prepare for new customers. To be successful, work together to make sure there are no customer service barriers when potential applicants contact the local office.
- The local office may need to review outreach activities already in place at the county and State level, as well as State policies on specific aspects of partnership.
- If you plan to discuss the optional State outreach plan with your local office, give the local office time to find out if the State has an optional outreach plan. If the State doesn't already have a plan, it may be something to explore as a possible funding source for your partnership. If the State has a plan, explore how your agency can be included.

The local office can also provide or help you obtain a wealth of information, including:

- Data on the underserved populations in the community;
- Updates on the outreach they are already doing, so you can enhance their efforts;
- Details about local office services, phone numbers, locations, and hours;
- Application forms and informational materials;
- Assistance with tracking and administrative data; and
- Training for your employees, partners or volunteers.



STEP 2 | SELECT A TARGET AUDIENCE

Figure out what populations you want to reach through your partnership. National SNAP data shows that the most hard-to-reach and underserved populations are seniors (age 60 and older), immigrants, and the working poor. However, the target audience for your community may be different.

For example, your community may have a large number of homeless individuals or unemployed people. You can:

- Talk to others in your office and in other community groups about which populations in your community tend to be underserved.
- Work with your State and local SNAP office to review State- or community-specific information on underserved populations.

STEP 3 | DETERMINE WHICH PARTNERS WILL EFFECTIVELY REACH THE TARGET AUDIENCE

To decide whom to choose as partners, brainstorm and make a list of organizations that your target audience trusts and uses. Seek advice from others:

- Ask the local SNAP office what organizations they work with and may be trusted by their clients.
- Ask staff in your office which organizations they work with on a regular basis.
- Take advantage of any advisory groups or county boards that work with your organization to find out more about how best to reach the target group.
 - * Ask existing partners for input about other groups that should be involved in community outreach.
- Ask your own customers for the names of groups with which they come into contact.

See page B 10 for a list of potential partners.



SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR BUSINESS PARTNERS

Although local businesses have a genuine interest in helping out the needy in their community and will most likely have a formal community relations staff member, they also are driven by profit motivation and will have to think about their bottom line. If you plan to approach a local business or retailer about partnership, you may have to emphasize the economic arguments for participation expansion more than others. (See “Introduction” section for SNAP fact sheet.) Be sure you can tell retailers how SNAP participation helps their business thrive. Be sure you can tell employers how participation in SNAP will help their employees.

See page B 11 for a list of activities for outreach partnerships.

STEP 4 | RESEARCH AND GET PREPARED

Increase your chances of success by being prepared before you contact your prospective partner.

RESEARCH

Take some time to learn as much as you can about your prospective partner. Make sure you understand the role the organization plays in the community and whom the organization serves. Following are some ways you can do this:

- Ask others in your office what they know about the prospective partner.
- Ask if anyone in your office has the name of a contact.
- Study the organization’s Web site.

GET PREPARED

Collect your ideas. Be prepared for questions your partner may ask. Be sure you can:

- Provide a brief overview of your organization.
- For community partners, promote the health and economic benefits of SNAP. (See page B 17)
- Present the partnership as a “win-win” situation for all parties.
- Explain the role partners can play to assist potentially eligible people in accessing SNAP. (See page B 16 for a list of ideas)
- If the SNAP office is one of your partners, explain the role the local office plays in your project.
- Discuss the importance of the project and why a potential partner should work with you to help their customers learn about and apply for SNAP benefits.



STEP 5

CONTACT YOUR PROSPECTIVE PARTNER

As you approach potential partners, remember that enthusiasm goes a long way. But if a potential partner says no to your ideas, don't get discouraged. Your ideas might not fit into their schedule right now. There will be other partnership opportunities. Try the next organization on your list.



CALL

First, call the potential partner to start the ball rolling and gauge their interest. Here are some tips for making this initial call:

- **Practice** the talking points in advance. Do this regardless of whether you are talking to an acquaintance or someone you don't know. (See the "Media Outreach" section for a pitch script.)
- **Don't just read** directly from the script; personalize and use a conversational tone.
- **Be respectful** of your contact's time; ask if it is a good time for a conversation.
- **Offer to schedule** an appointment to conduct a meeting in person.
- **Invite** them to your offices for a tour and a brief overview of the SNAP application process.



WRITE

If you can't reach your contact by phone, send an e-mail or letter. The following are some tips on composing your e-mail or letter:

- **Personalize and localize** the information as much as possible. Your partner will want to know why you selected their group and what role you will want them to play in the project. (See the sample partner letter on page B 14.)
- **Keep the letter short** and to the point.
- **Proofread** your letter before sending it out.
- **Promise to follow up.** Don't wait for a call. Post a reminder on your calendar and call back in a few days.



MEET

If you have scheduled a meeting with your partners, here are some helpful tips for a successful meeting:

- **Confirm the meeting** date, time, and any equipment a day or two before the scheduled meeting.
- **Consider sending** your partner an agenda and some informational materials by e-mail or mail before the meeting.
- **Tailor your presentation** to your audience. Take along materials from this toolkit or your agency that are appropriate to your audience, and leave materials for the partner to review after the meeting.
- **Provide your partners with information** about the SNAP application process. If you are talking with a local SNAP office, discuss how your organization will submit the application forms. Clear procedures are needed to protect the date the application was filed.
- **Be clear about your role** in this project.
- **Be clear and direct** about how you would like them to be involved.
- **Be clear on funding.** If there is no funding available, be sure that is understood.
- **Bring your partnership ideas** to the table.
- **Listen to the ideas** your future partners have.
- **Look professional,** be on time, and be respectful of their time.



STEP 6 | JOINTLY ESTABLISH YOUR OUTREACH PLAN

Once you and your partner have agreed to work together, take some time to jointly establish a plan for your outreach. Discuss your goals and the strategies or activities you will use to reach those goals.

USING VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are enthusiastic and eager to help. If your plans call for the use of volunteers, be sure you discuss these issues with your partner as well:

- How will you train volunteers to let them know what they can or can't do? For example, they can schedule appointments and fill out application forms, but they cannot certify households for SNAP benefits.
- How will you educate volunteers about SNAP?
- How will you handle volunteer turnover?
- How will you thank your volunteers?

Examples of outreach goals:

- Educate people about the nutrition benefits of SNAP benefits.
- Increase the number of applicants that fill out and file an application form for SNAP benefits at locations other than the SNAP office.
- Increase the number of individuals prescreened for SNAP benefits.
- Increase the number of callers to your or the local/State toll-free number.
- Develop a local Web site which will contain community resources or other information.
- Increase the number of hits to your Web site, if applicable.
- Promote the location containing the SNAP application form or prescreening tool, if applicable.
- Distribute application forms at locations such as food banks.
- Promote the EBT card to possible participants as a confidential way to receive benefits.
- Promote extended hours.

You will also want to discuss the following issues with your new partner:

- How many people do you want to reach?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of each partner?
- How will funding be handled?
- How will you evaluate your work?
- How will problems be resolved?



STEP 7 | CONFIRM THE PARTNERSHIP ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Confirm your partnership arrangements in writing by sending a letter to your new partner. If the partnership is straightforward, this document can be simple. Just list the details of the partnership. You may want to include a summary of the role and responsibilities of each partner. For an example, see the end of this section.

STEP 8 | STAY IN TOUCH WITH YOUR PARTNERS

Once your partnership is established and outreach is underway, keep your partners informed and involved. It is especially important to keep the local SNAP office informed of your work. Give them advance notice of any events or special projects that you host.

Here are some suggestions to help maintain your partnership:

- Update your partners on activities. Be sure to call or meet periodically to check in on how things are going.
- Send periodic thank-you notes to partners and volunteers. Let them know how many new people are getting the benefits of SNAP as a result of their efforts.
- Offer to include your partners in promotional activities, like a newsletter or an event.



KEYS TO:

Establishing
and Maintaining
a Strong
Partnership

- ➔ **Present** the partnership as a “win-win” situation for all parties.
- ➔ **Agree** on goals and objectives.
- ➔ **Develop** clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
- ➔ **Practice** clear and frequent communications.
- ➔ **Show** appreciation through recognition.



STEP 9 | EVALUATE YOUR PARTNERSHIP

Although partnerships can be time-consuming, they can also be a valuable part of your work. It is important to track the value of these collaborations so that you can find out if you met your goals, and what did and didn't work. You can use either process measures, outcome measures, or both, depending on the nature of your partnership.

PARTNERSHIP PROCESS MEASURES

- Has the number of partnerships increased since you began your alliance-building program?
- When you established your partnerships, you began with a clear list of expectations. Are those expectations being met?
- Do staff who are working on the partnerships feel it is proceeding well?
- Do your partners approach you with new and creative ideas for working together?
- Have your partners provided you with new information and expertise?

PARTNERSHIP OUTCOME MEASURES

- Have you seen an increase in calls to your local number?
- When clients call or visit the local SNAP office, are they asked how they learned about SNAP? Was it from your outreach effort? If these clients were a part of your project, does the local office staff think they are better prepared (for instance, form filled out, verification documents in hand) for the certification interview?
- Work with the local SNAP office to assign a code (like color, label, or number) for your organization that is placed on all applications that you distribute. Ask the local office if they can track this information and report back to you.
- Has your ability to reach the target audience improved? Have more people from the target audience called or come into your office or visited the local SNAP office as a result of a partnership?
- If you host an event, such as prescreening at a grocery store, track the number of people in attendance and the number of applicants prescreened for SNAP benefits.
- If certification interviews are conducted, work with the local office to track how many.
- If informational materials were distributed, track what materials were used and how many were given out.
- Did your partner help generate media coverage that increases the awareness of SNAP benefits? Keep track of the media clips.



STEP 10

SHARE YOUR SUCCESS

Once you have been able to demonstrate success, share it! By sharing your partnership successes, other organizations will clearly see the value and benefits of joining in the outreach effort. You can:

- Mention your current partners when you are at meetings and conferences.
- Write up your success and submit it on SNAP's Promising Outreach Practices Web page. (See the Promising Practices section of the toolkit for more information.)
- Nominate your local office as a Hunger Champion. (See this Web site for more information: http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/coalition/2008_hc_nomination-form.pdf.)



POTENTIAL PARTNERS

COMMUNITY SERVICE GROUPS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food banks and pantries • Community action agencies • Homeless shelters and soup kitchens • Family support centers (e.g., day care, domestic violence shelters, literacy, utility assistance programs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal Aid • Salvation Army • Goodwill • Voluntary Income Tax Assistance (VITA) locations
FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Churches • Temples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mosques • Synagogues
CITY, COUNTY, STATE, OR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local SNAP offices • Local health department • Employment assistance offices, including one-stop career centers • Schools • Department of Motor Vehicles • Property tax offices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayor or city or county officials • Housing projects • Federal agencies (for prisoners with imminent release) • Local Social Security office • Local military bases or installations • Local or regional IRS offices
BUSINESS AND LABOR	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers • Grocery stores • Local unions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transit providers • Utility companies
MEDICAL COMMUNITY	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctors • Hospitals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pharmacies • Community Health Centers
SENIORS' GROUPS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisted living facilities • Area Agencies on Aging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AARP chapters • Meals-on-Wheels program
IMMIGRANT GROUPS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local consulates • Clubes de Oriundos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immigrant service organizations (e.g., the Michoacan Federation, Lao American Community Service)
MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radio • TV 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newspapers • Internet



ACTIVITIES FOR POTENTIAL OUTREACH PARTNERSHIPS

Community groups/agencies/other organizations can:

- ☐ Conduct SNAP eligibility prescreening.
- ☐ Provide application assistance. Distribute SNAP application forms and help potential clients fill out the forms. Explain to potential applicants what types of information and documentation the local SNAP office will need in order to complete the application process.
- ☐ Provide translation services, when appropriate.
- ☐ Include information about the nutrition and health benefits of SNAP in newsletters or other local outreach materials.
- ☐ Post posters or flyers in lobbies, waiting areas, employee break areas, health clinic checkout areas, nutrition education rooms, etc.
- ☐ Post information on their Web site and link to Step 1, the FNS eligibility prescreening tool.
- ☐ Provide SNAP information or giveaways at community events such as health or county fairs.
- ☐ Host a "nutrition/health fair" to promote SNAP benefits.

Retailers/grocers can:

- ☐ Play PSAs on in-store radio.
- ☐ Include flyers and brochures in mailings and weekly circulars.
- ☐ Include SNAP benefit information on store receipts and in grocery bags.
- ☐ Print SNAP information on grocery bags. Make it lively--a grocery bag image containing the national toll-free number is available from USDA. (Graphic is included on disc in this toolkit.)
- ☐ Advertise SNAP information on grocery carts.
- ☐ Design, produce, and post promotional materials about SNAP benefits in the store — posters, banners, floor graphics, recipe cards, etc. (Logos for graphic design are included on the disc in this toolkit.)
- ☐ Provide SNAP information in the checkout display area.
- ☐ Underwrite paid advertising on local media.
- ☐ Underwrite printing of outreach materials.
- ☐ Allow eligibility prescreening to be conducted in the store or outside of it.

more>



ACTIVITIES FOR POTENTIAL OUTREACH PARTNERSHIPS

Pharmacies can:

- ☐ Include SNAP information on the patient information form that is stapled to prescription drugs.
- ☐ Include information in circulars.
- ☐ Air PSAs on in-store radio.
- ☐ Advertise SNAP information on shopping carts.
- ☐ Post information on pharmacy Web sites.
- ☐ Encourage sponsorship of health fairs where prescreening for benefits can take place.

Employers can:

- ☐ Include SNAP information in new employee packets, newsletters, job training programs, etc.
- ☐ Put a notice about a local or national toll-free number on check stubs.
- ☐ Make periodic announcements about SNAP over the intercom system.
- ☐ Post SNAP information on bulletin boards.

Transit companies can:

- ☐ Provide free advertising space on bus shelters, buses, and subways/light rail.
- ☐ Include flyers and brochures in mailings.

Utility companies can:

- ☐ Put SNAP benefits information in newsletters.
- ☐ Print information on utility bills.
- ☐ Enclose insert along with invoice.
- ☐ Allow organizations to give out informational materials or prescreen for SNAP benefits onsite.

Media organizations can:

- ☐ Air public service announcements (PSAs). (See the PSA section of this toolkit for further information.)
- ☐ Provide a disc jockey or on-air celebrity to be the official spokesperson of your outreach effort, or make an appearance at community events, such as a "nutrition fair."
- ☐ Serve as a media advisor to your outreach efforts.
- ☐ Introduce groups to local advertisers who may be interested in funding newspaper, radio, or TV ads.



GET INVOLVED!

PARTNERS WITH A COMMON GOAL

Community and faith-based groups, retailers, and antihunger advocacy groups across the country have a common goal to reduce hunger and improve nutrition.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

By coming together in partnership, we can advance our efforts to inform individuals and families in our communities about SNAP, ensuring that everyone can eat right, even when money's tight.

RAISING AWARENESS

There are a number of ways you can help inform members of your community about the nutrition benefits of SNAP.

WAYS TO INFORM MEMBERS OF YOUR COMMUNITY

- ☐ Provide free SNAP resources including flyers for waiting rooms, health fairs, libraries, and community centers.
- ☐ Insert free SNAP materials in grocery bags, informational packets, new employee materials, etc.
- ☐ Include the SNAP toll-free number, 1-800-221-5689, or Web site www.fns.usda.gov/snap on promotional pieces such as posters, flyers, milk or egg cartons, paper or plastic bags, store receipts, and in-store displays.
- ☐ Include information about Step 1, SNAP's online prescreening tool, in promotional pieces or make arrangements with employers or senior groups to allow individuals to use the prescreening tool to learn their possible eligibility for SNAP benefits.
- ☐ Publish an article about the nutrition benefits of SNAP in your employee or group newsletters and magazines.
- ☐ Broadcast SNAP public service announcements (PSAs) at your store or company or use your contacts to get donated time at radio stations. PSAs can be downloaded from www.fns.usda.gov/cga/Radio/radio.htm.
- ☐ Add a link to www.fns.usda.gov/snap from your Web page.
- ☐ Host a special SNAP prescreening event, cooking demonstration, or information fair.
- ☐ Volunteer at an activity to raise awareness about SNAP (options could include helping at a food pantry or food bank, soup kitchen, or prescreening event).
- ☐ Subscribe to the SNAP Outreach Coalition listserv and learn about other outreach efforts taking place across the country. To join, send an e-mail to outreach.coalition@fns.usda.gov.



PARTNER LETTER TEMPLATE

[DATE]

[NAME]

[TITLE]

[BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION]

[ADDRESS]

[CITY], [STATE] [ZIP CODE]

How can I initiate a partnership? If a relationship is not currently in place, a good way to initiate a partnership is by sending a letter to a community relations, marketing, or communications contact. Your letter should outline your outreach effort, provide background information on your organization and SNAP, and describe the nature of your partnership request. Following is a template letter that you can use with your own letterhead.

Dear Mr./Ms. [NAME]:

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the first line of defense against hunger. On behalf of [ORGANIZATION NAME], I am writing to invite you to lend your support to [STATE/CITY/TOWN'S] SNAP outreach effort by *[Describe the request — an activity you would like the organization to participate in, such as: hosting a health fair or prescreening event; volunteering; distributing informational flyers; promoting events; etc.].*

The goal of this outreach effort is to ensure that everyone who is eligible for SNAP knows about the program and is able to access benefits. Our organization is helping to promote the nutrition benefits of SNAP.

[Provide local information on what your organization is doing, who you plan to target in your campaign, and the need in your community (number of potentially eligible individuals that are not being served for this type of effort.)]

We hope you will join us in supporting [ORGANIZATION or COALITION NAME's] outreach efforts; we would be honored to work with you. With your support, we are confident that we can reach more of [CITY/STATE's] individuals and families not yet enrolled in SNAP. By participating, *[List benefits to organization such as: reinforces position as community leader; provides opportunity for positive media exposure; offers community service opportunities; etc.].*

I will contact you in the next few days to further discuss the vital role you can play in helping our community. In the meantime, feel free to contact me at [PHONE NUMBER] should you have any questions. I have also enclosed additional information on SNAP benefits for your review.

Again, we hope you can join us in supporting this important effort, and look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

[NAME]

[TITLE]

Enclosures



PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT LETTER TEMPLATE

[DATE]

[NAME]

[TITLE]

[BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION]

[ADDRESS]

[CITY], [STATE] [ZIP CODE]

*Highlighted are
some examples
of what you
might include
in this letter.*

Dear Mr./Ms. [NAME]:

Thank you so much for agreeing to partner with [NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION] to help us reach those low-income individuals and families in our community who can benefit from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Our partnership is part of a larger national effort to ensure that everyone who is eligible for SNAP benefits receives them.

Below is an outline of the partnership specifics we discussed:

In-Kind Donations

- Financial contribution for production of materials such as pamphlets, bus/subway ads, bus/subway shelter ads, pot holders, recipe cards, etc.
- In-store space to conduct nutrition events, prescreenings, etc.
- Placement of PSA or donated print advertisement space, etc.
- Personnel support to help fill out SNAP application forms, obtain verification documents, etc.

Promotional Opportunities

- Appearance of company name in SNAP media materials.

Visibility-Advertising, Media and Event Signage

- Your company's logo on SNAP signage and in outreach materials.
- Opportunity for a company representative to attend/participate at event(s).

Within your community, there may be a host of potential partners interested in joining your effort to boost SNAP enrollment and inform people of the nutrition benefits of the program. Retailers, businesses, community-based organizations, and government entities can all play a vital role in SNAP outreach.

We're so glad you see the value of partnering on such an important outreach effort. Please feel free to call me at [PHONE NUMBER] with any questions. Thank you once again.

Sincerely,

[NAME]

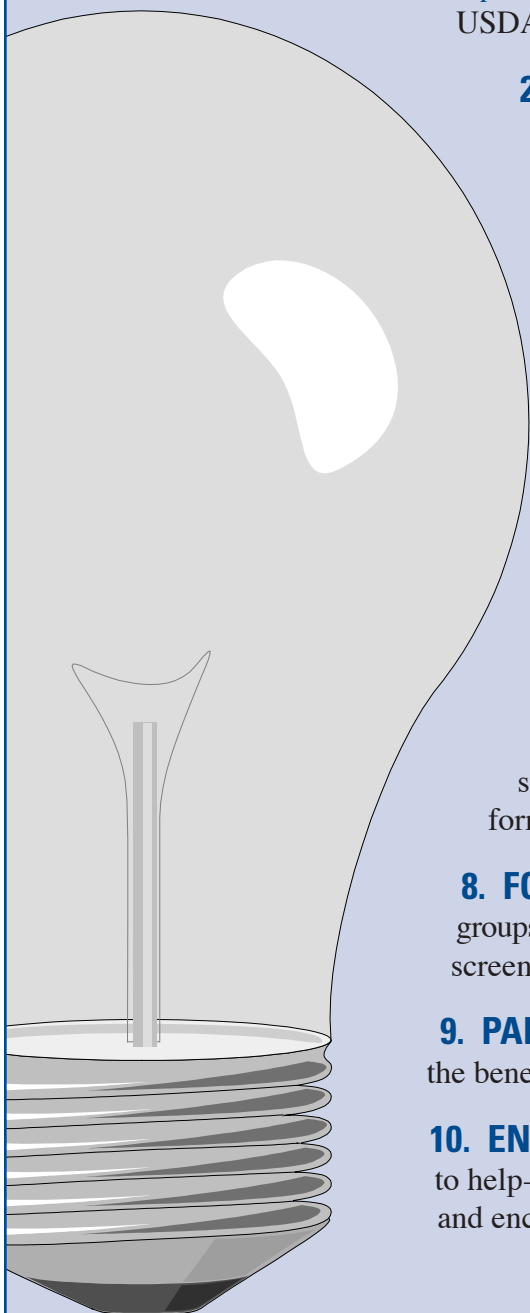
[TITLE]



10 IDEAS FOR RETAILER SNAP OUTREACH

Help your customers learn about the nutrition benefits of SNAP. SNAP benefits bring Federal funds into your community that can increase sales at your store. With SNAP benefits, your low-income customers can purchase more healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables, whole-grain foods, and dairy products. As a retailer, you can:

- 1. DISPLAY** SNAP posters, flyers, magnets, and other materials. Go to <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/default.htm> for free USDA materials and promotional items.
- 2. INVITE** local groups such as food banks, antihunger groups, or other community or faith-based groups to staff an information table to give out SNAP information or prescreen customers for eligibility.
- 3. PUT** SNAP information, such as national or local SNAP toll-free numbers, on grocery bags and in weekly circulars and bulletins.
- 4. PUBLISH** SNAP materials in languages spoken in your community.
- 5. PRINT** SNAP promotional messages on store receipts.
- 6. BROADCAST** SNAP public service announcements in the store.
- 7. HOST** nutritious food tastings or cooking demonstrations. Give out recipe cards that contain nutrition information and the national or local SNAP toll-free number.
- 8. FORM** partnerships with local community and advocacy groups. Host a “health fair” to conduct SNAP eligibility pre-screenings. Invite local media to the event.
- 9. PARTNER** with EBT processors to educate cashiers about the benefits of SNAP.
- 10. ENCOURAGE** EBT processors to add recorded messages to help-desk numbers promoting the nutrition benefits of SNAP and encouraging SNAP clients to “tell a friend.”



SNAP: PUTTING HEALTHY FOOD WITHIN REACH

The Program Helps Low-Income Families:



- **Stretch food dollars.** Those receiving SNAP benefits spend more money on food than other low-income households.
- **Fight obesity through education.** Nutrition educators teach SNAP participants the importance of a quality diet, how to prepare healthy foods, and how to make healthy choices.
- **Put food on the table for their children.** SNAP benefits are an investment in our future. Nearly 50 percent of participants are children.
- **Keep elderly family members independent.** For the elderly, participation can help improve nutritional status and well-being and increase independence. Nine percent of SNAP recipients are age 60 or older.
- **Make the transition to self-sufficiency.** SNAP helps participants become financially stable and provides needed support as they transition to self-sufficiency. Half of all new participants will leave the program within nine months.

The Program Helps States and Local Communities:



- **Support local food retailers.** The average monthly SNAP benefit is approximately \$222, which is spent in local grocery stores.
- **Generate economic activity.** Every \$5 in new SNAP benefits generates up to \$9.20 in community spending.
- **Support farms.** On average, \$1 billion of retail food demand by SNAP recipients generates 3,300 farm jobs.
- **Leverage Federal funds.** SNAP benefits are Federal funds. By increasing the number of people in SNAP, communities can bring Federal money into their States and communities.

The Program Helps Businesses and Workers:



- **Achieve optimal performance.** Employees whose food needs are met at home may have higher productivity and take fewer sick days for themselves and their children.
- **Attain self-sufficiency.** SNAP benefits supplement the food budgets of low-income workers so they can stay independent and work toward self-sufficiency.



SAMPLE MAILER INSERTS: PROJECT BREAD
ENGLISH AND SPANISH

Know someone struggling to put food on the table?

For information about food stamps and other free and low-cost food resources, call:

Monday - Friday
8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Project Bread 
FoodSource Hotline
1-800-645-8333

The FoodSource Hotline is funded by the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

3/05

Sp/E

Para español vea el reverso.

Para más información sobre cupones de alimentos y otros recursos
alimenticios tanto gratuitos como de bajo costo llame al

De lunes a viernes
Desde las 8 a.m. a las 5 p.m.

Project Bread 
FoodSource Hotline
1-800-645-8333

La línea directa y gratuita FoodSource es financiada por el Departamento de Asistencia Transitoria de Massachusetts

Sp/05



PAIRING YOUR MESSAGE

WITH THE RIGHT AUDIENCE



MEDIA OUTREACH

Why media outreach?

One of the most efficient and cost-effective ways to inform members of the community about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is through local television, radio, and newspapers.

What is media outreach?

Media outreach takes many forms — from a simple call to a reporter to suggest a story, to a formal press release or an organized event. All can be effective. Match your media efforts to what works best in your community.

Why would the media be interested in covering SNAP issues?

There are many compelling sides to the SNAP story. It is about the strength of a local community working together to help those who are less fortunate. It is about people facing challenges and doing what is right for themselves and their families. It has all the elements of an interesting story that local media want to cover. Your local media have both a community responsibility and a business interest in providing readers and viewers with valuable information.

What does media outreach involve?

Media outreach consists of the following seven steps:

1. **SELECT** a target audience.
2. **DEVELOP** a media list.
3. **BRAINSTORM** story ideas.
4. **PREPARE** materials and information.
5. **IDENTIFY** spokespersons.
6. **CONTACT** the media.
7. **EVALUATE** your efforts.

You may not have the time or resources to follow every step. The important thing is to keep the media informed about what you are doing so they can get the word out to eligible people in your community that SNAP benefits are available to them.

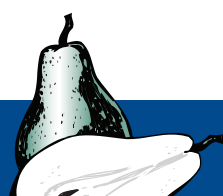
How will this section help me with media outreach?

This section of the toolkit elaborates on each of the seven steps. It also provides information on media outreach tactics that require a little more effort, such as media events and getting into the media's editorial section. Regardless of how elaborate your effort is, this section will help you to work more effectively with the press and garner positive media coverage of hunger and nutrition issues and SNAP.

Understanding that you may be working with limited staff resources, this section of the toolkit also includes tips and template materials to use when you contact the media.

TIPS & TOOLS

Placing stories in your local community's print and broadcast media can lead to bigger things. Frequently, statewide and national media outlets get story ideas from coverage at the local level. Do not be surprised if a story about SNAP outreach in your community is picked up by one of the major networks! Recently, a story about SNAP participation in local media outlets in Pennsylvania and Texas caught the eye of National Public Radio and led to an airing of a positive story about SNAP.



STEP 1 | SELECT A TARGET AUDIENCE

Select your audience(s). Determine whom you are trying to reach before you begin your media outreach. Generally, you are trying to reach people who are eligible for SNAP benefits but not receiving them. Specific examples include:

- People 60 years of age or older
- Children
- Families
- Working poor
- Immigrants

National research shows that the most underserved and hardest-to-reach populations tend to be seniors, immigrants, and the working poor. The audience for your community may vary. Talk to people in your local SNAP office to see whom they are trying to reach. Do your own research on underserved populations and the best methods to reach your selected audience(s). For more on this, see the Resources section of this toolkit.

GOALS

Before you begin your outreach, establish some simple goals for your effort. Examples include:

- **Educating people** about the nutrition benefits of SNAP
- **Increasing the number of calls** to the local, State, or national toll-free number
- **Increasing hits** on your Web site
- **Promoting** the EBT card
- **Promoting extended hours** for SNAP application certification interviews

STEP 2 | DEVELOP A MEDIA LIST

Determine the best channels for reaching your target audience by researching the answers to the following questions. Then begin to create a media list, which is a list of local news media organizations and their contact information.

Does your target audience:

- Listen to certain radio stations?
- Watch particular TV channels?
- Read local community papers or daily newspapers?



Check with your partner organizations to see if they already have a list that they are willing to share.

POINTERS TO DEVELOP A MEDIA LIST	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Check the local phone book for listings of television and radio stations, local daily and weekly newspapers, and magazines.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Use the U.S. Newspaper List Web site at www.usnpl.com .
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Check the local library for media reference books, such as the Bacon's Newspaper Directory or the News Media Yellow Book.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Check newspaper and television Web sites. Search their online archives to find names of reporters who have covered stories on SNAP, hunger, poverty, or nutrition in the past. Review the articles previously written or stories broadcast by the reporter to get a feel for her or his style and areas of interest.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ask your clients about their preferred local media sources.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Add reporters' names to your list when you read a story or meet a reporter working on a story about hunger or community groups.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Add the local offices or bureaus of national media organizations. These are typically located in State capitals or large cities. Wire services like the Associated Press (AP) (see page E 5), Reuters, and the Scripps Howard News Service provide articles to local newspapers. Large radio and television networks also distribute stories to local affiliates. A listing of these is provided on page E 6.



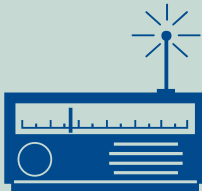
As you build your media list, add the names and contact information (phone, e-mail, fax, address) for specific individuals within each organization. These individuals may include reporters, editors, and/or producers. By appealing to specific individuals, you are more likely to get a response. Double-check to make sure your contact names are up-to-date. Call the main number of the newspaper or station and ask the operator for assistance.

On your list, also make note of publication dead lines so you can contact editors and reporters well in advance of when you hope to actually see your story in print.



CHOOSING THE MOST APPROPRIATE CONTACT

There are a number of individuals within a news organization who shape what is printed or broadcast. People to include on your media list are:

APPROPRIATE CONTACTS	
<p>NEWSPAPER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporters who cover health, social, and family issues, • Writers for the calendar or community events page, • Community columnists, • Editorial page editors, and • Assignment editors who direct reporters or photographers to cover events. 	
<p>TV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporters/on-air personalities, • Planning/assignment editors, • News broadcast producers, and • Producers of morning shows or community programs. 	
<p>RADIO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News directors, • Assignment editors, • Public affairs show hosts and producers, and • On-air personalities or commentators. 	

Keep in mind that each media outlet may have a separate staff that writes for its Web site, and remember to include smaller media outlets, such as local cable access TV stations, community newspapers, and local parenting magazines and tabloids.

SAMPLE MEDIA FILE

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Hon	First	Last	Organization	Title	Address 1	City	St	Zip	Phone	Fax	E-mail
Mr.	Bob	Cook	Akron Beacon Journal	Opinion Page Writer	12 Exchange Street	Akron	OH	44328	330-123-3000	330-123-9235	bcook@thebeaconjournal.com
Mr.	Tom	Farmer	Alameda Times-Star	Opinion Page Director	345 Sixth Street	Oakland	CA	94612-2601	510-456-6333	510-456-6487	tfarmer@angnewspapers.com
Mr.	Keith	Baker	Antelope Valley Press	Opinion Page Writer	78 Pepper Lane	Palmdale	CA	93590-4050	661-789-2700	661-789-4870	kbaker@avpress.com
Ms.	Jeanne	Gardener	Arizona Republic	Opinion Page Editor	900 Peachtree Blvd.	Phoenix	AZ	85004	602-101-8000	602-101-8933	igardener@arizonarepublic.com
Mr.	Andrew	Rice	Asbury Park Press	Opinion Page Editor	123 Apple Way	Neptune	NJ	07754	732-234-6000	732-234-4818	arice@app.com
Mr.	David	Glass	Atlanta Journal-Constitution	Opinion Page Editor	4500 Water Street	Atlanta	GA	30303	404-567-5151	404-567-5611	dglass@ajc.com
Ms.	Carolyn	Spooner	Bellingham Herald	Opinion Page Editor	P0 Box 678	Bellingham	WA	98227-1277	360-890-2600	360-890-2826	cspooner@bellin.h.gannett.com
Mr.	Donald	Newton	Boston Globe	Opinion Page Editor	910 Orchard Street	Boston	MA	02107-2378	617-987-2000	617-987-2098	dnewton@globe.com
Ms.	Ginger	Fisher	Boston Globe	Opinion Page Columnist	P0 Box 120	Boston	MA	02107-2378	617-654-2000	617-654-2098	gfisher@globe.com
Ms.	Rosemary	Wheaton	Boston Globe	Opinion Page Editor	3400 Grocer Blvd.	Boston	MA	02107-2378	617-321-2000	617-321-2098	mwheaton@globe.com
Ms.	Christine	Miller	Boston Herald	Opinion Page Editor	56 Maple Avenue	Boston	MA	02106	617-246-3000	617-246-1315	cmiller@bostonherald.com
Mr.	Stewart	Brown	Boston Herald	Opinion Page Columnist	789 Honey Avenue	Boston	MA	02106	617-802-3000	617-802-1315	sbrown@bostonherald.com
Mr.	Herbert	Smith	Bradenton Herald	Opinion Page Editor	1000 Raspberry Way	Bradenton	FL	34206-0921	941-531-0411	941-531-7094	hsmith@bradentonherald.com
Ms.	Rosemary	Green	Bradenton Herald	Opinion Page Writer	P0 Box 987	Bradenton	FL	34206-0921	941-579-0411	941-579-7094	rgreen@bradentonherald.com
Ms.	Olive	Johnson	Brattleboro Reformer	Opinion Page Editor	654 Sugar Way	Brattleboro	VT	05302-0802	802-234-2311	802-234-1305	ojohnson@sover.net
Mr.	Marc	Stover	Bucks County Courier Times	Opinion Page Editor	3200 Lime Avenue	Levittown	PA	19057	215-567-4000	215-567-4177	mstover@calkinsnewspapers.com
Mr.	Charles	Mills	Cape Cod Times	Opinion Page Editor	101 North 40th Street	Hyannis	MA	02601-4037	508-890-1200	508-890-3292	cmills@capecodonline.com
Mr.	Michael	Huntley	Chicago Sun-Times	Opinion Page Editor	234 River Avenue	Chicago	IL	60611-3532	312-876-3000	312-876-2120	mhuntley@suntimes.com
Ms.	Trudy	Black	Chicago Tribune	Opinion Page Editor	5600 Orchard Street	Chicago	IL	60611-4041	312-543-3232	312-543-2598	tblack@tribune.com
Ms.	Clara	Baker	Christian Science Monitor	Opinion Page Editor	780 Market Street	Boston	MA	02115	617-123-2000	617-123-7575	cbaker@csp.com
Ms.	Keith	White	Christian Science Monitor	Opinion Page Writer	900 Plains Blvd.	Boston	MA	02115	617-456-2000	617-456-7575	kwhite@csp.com
Ms.	Elizabeth	Rancher	Columbian	Opinion Page Writer	1000 Greenway Street	Vancouver	WA	98666-0180	360-789-3391	360-789-6031	mgumsey@columbian.com
Mr.	Mike	Gumsey	Columbian	Opinion Page Writer	200 Sowers Avenue	Vancouver	WA	98666-0180	360-102-3391	360-102-6031	esmith@columbian.com
Ms.	Elsie	Smith	Concord Monitor	Opinion Page Editor	340 Cooler Street	Concord	NH	03302-1177	603-345-5301	603-345-8120	ssummer@concordmonitor.com
Mr.	Stephen	Summer	Connecticut Post	Opinion Page Editor	560 Harvest Lane	Bridgeport	CT	06604-4560	203-678-0161	203-678-8158	swinters@ctpost.com
Mr.	David	Green	Conroe Courier	Opinion Page Editor	7800 Sugar Avenue	Conroe	TX	77305-0609	936-910-6671	936-910-6729	dgreen@conroecourier.com
Mr.	Harvey	Pine	Contra Costa Times	Opinion Page Editor	9100 Orange Lane	Walnut Creek	CA	94596	925-765-2525	925-765-0239	hpine@netcom.com
Mr.	Alan	Farmer	Courier-Post	Opinion Page Editor	2300 Culter Street	Cherry Hill	NJ	08002-2905	856-432-6000	856-432-2831	afarmer@courierpostonline.com
Mr.	John	Miller	Daily Camera	Opinion Page Editor	45000 Fig Lane	Boulder	CO	80306-0591	303-109-1202	303-109-1155	jmliller@thedailycamera.com
Mr.	Martin	Cook	Daily Local News	Opinion Page Editor	60 West Acres Street	West Chester	PA	19382-2800	610-876-1775	610-876-1180	mcook@dailylocal.com
Mr.	Buddy	Johns	Daily Record	Opinion Page Editor	700 Bloom Way	Parsippany	NJ	07054-0217	973-543-6200	973-543-6666	bjones@morristo.gannett.com
Mr.	Bill	Grower	Daily Republic	Opinion Page Editor	89 Beesley Street	Fairfield	CA	94533-0747	707-210-4646	707-210-5924	bgrower@dailyrepublic.com
Ms.	Violet	Pinter	Daily Times-Call	Opinion Page Editor	10 Apple Street	Longmont	CO	80502-0299	303-345-2244	303-345-8615	vpinter@dailytimescall.com
Mr.	Richard	Moos	Dallas Morning News	Opinion Page Editor	246 Market Lane	Dallas	TX	75202	214-678-8222	214-678-8319	rmoos@dallasnews.com
Ms.	Sheri	Coffee	Delaware State News	Opinion Page Editor	810 Peachtree Blvd.	Dover	DE	19903-0737	302-864-3600	302-864-8223	scoffee@newszap.com
Ms.	Jane	Gardener	Denton Record-Chronicle	Opinion Page Editor	135 Mercantile Lane	Denton	TX	76202-0369	940-642-3811	940-642-9666	igardener@dentonrc.com
Mr.	Robert	Brown	Denver Post	Opinion Page Editor	79 Grainer Blvd.	Denver	CO	80202	303-420-1010	303-420-1369	rbrown@aol.com
Mr.	Merrill	Stover	Desert Dispatch	Opinion Page Editor	468 Orchard Way	Barstow	CA	92311-3289	760-975-2257	760-975-0685	mstover@link.freedom.com
Mr.	Ron	Fisher	Detroit Free Press	Opinion Page Editor	357 Pear Street	Detroit	MI	48226	313-753-6400	313-753-6774	rfisher@freepress.com
Mr.	Thomas	Cook	Detroit News	Opinion Page Columnist	5700 Ginger Lane	Detroit	MI	48226	313-531-6400	313-531-6417	tcCook@detnews.com
Ms.	Helen	Rice	Diario Las Americas	State News Editor	P0 Box 9001	Miami	FL	33159-2698	305-213-3341	305-213-7668	hrice@diariolasamericas.com
Mr.	Craig	Glass	Eastside Journal	Opinion Page Editor	P0 Box 123	Bellevue	WA	98009-9230	425-645-2222	425-645-0603	cglass@eastsidejournal.com
Ms.	Araceli	Wheaton	El Nuevo Herald	Opinion Page Editor	4501 Fisherman's Lane	Miami	FL	33132-1609	305-978-3535	305-978-2207	awheaton@herald.com
Ms.	Pam	Stover	Florida Today	Opinion Page Editor	5602 Corner Street	Melbourne	FL	32941-9000	321-867-3500	321-867-6620	pstover@brevard.gannett.com
Mr.	Bob	Hunt	Fort Worth Star-Telegram	Opinion Page Editor	6703 Cooks Avenue	Fort Worth	TX	76101	817-645-7400	817-645-7789	bhunt@star-telegram.com
Mr.	Paul	Stewart	Fort Worth Star-Telegram	Opinion Page Director	P0 Box 7804	Fort Worth	TX	76101	817-312-7400	817-312-7789	pstewart@star-telegram.com
Ms.	Ann	Green	Gillette News-Record	Publisher	P0 Box 8905	Gillette	WY	82717-3006	307-875-9306	307-875-9306	agreen@vcn.com
Mr.	Elliott	Golden	Gloucester County Times	Opinion Page Editor	9006 South Bend Street	Woodbury	NJ	08096-2488	856-942-3300	856-942-5480	egolden@sjnewsco.com
Mr.	Donovan	Budding	Greeley Tribune	Opinion Page Editor	123 Blossom Way	Greeley	CO	80632-1690	956-666-2017	956-666-2017	dbudding@greeleytrib.com
Mr.	Michael	Cook	Greeley Tribune	Opinion Page Editor	123 Blossom Way	Greeley	CO	80632-1690	956-666-2017	956-666-2017	mcCook@scrib.com



STEP 3

BRAINSTORM
STORY IDEAS






Although much of the news covered on TV or in the newspaper is unanticipated, you can sometimes generate interest by calling the media with a compelling story.

What makes your story newsworthy?

Consider the aspects of a news story that kept you engaged and interested. Provide local statistics and stories and offer the reporter an interesting angle.

What are some examples of newsworthy stories?

- Launch of a new program.
- Start of a new outreach effort for a specific audience like seniors, immigrants such as Hispanics, or working poor.
- Information about an organization or a community leader who has recently shown interest in issues such as nutrition or SNAP benefits.
- Community happenings that tie into SNAP issues, such as a factory closing or a new community partnership.

FIVE COMPONENTS OF A NEWSWORTHY STORY	
	TIMING: The word <i>news</i> means exactly what it says: things that are new. In this electronic age, people are used to receiving immediate news updates. If it happened today, it's news. If the same thing happened last week, it's no longer interesting. Think ahead to upcoming actions, events, holiday or seasonal stories, and volunteer appreciation stories — and plan your media outreach in advance so reporters can get the story while it is still news.
	SIGNIFICANCE: The number of people affected by a story is important. If a significant number of people in your community are eligible for SNAP, yet are not tapping into the benefits, this will be considered newsworthy.
	PROXIMITY: The closer the story hits to home, the more newsworthy it is.
	PROMINENCE: Famous people get more coverage simply because they are famous. But celebrities do not have to come from Hollywood — they can be local politicians, prominent business owners, hometown sports heroes, or key community leaders.
	HUMAN INTEREST: Human interest stories appeal to the readers' emotions. Talking about the benefits of SNAP through a first-person account is a good way to personalize what readers or viewers might otherwise think is merely a government program that has no relevancy to their lives.

STEP 4

PREPARE MATERIALS
AND INFORMATION

Once you have your story idea, get ready to present it to your local media.

How do I prepare my story?

Start by preparing any new materials and collecting background information. You might wish to check with your local SNAP office to see whether they have information you can use that is specific to your community.

In some cases, you might not need to develop any media materials. You may simply call or e-mail a reporter with your pitch (see step 6).

If your story idea is time-sensitive or about a piece of breaking news, develop a press release.

Sample media materials are provided in the media relations section.

EXAMPLES OF MEDIA MATERIALS THAT MAY NEED TO BE PREPARED

- PRESS RELEASE:** A 1–2 page document with information about your news. Press releases should be issued only for timely and significant happenings.
- MEDIA ADVISORY:** A 1-page document that lists enough information to pique a reporter’s interest without giving away the whole story. Usually, these are sent out before media events (see pages F 6- F 10 for more information).
- PITCH LETTER:** A brief letter that presents your story idea.
- FACT SHEET:** A document with statistical information about your news.
- BIOGRAPHIES:** Background information about your spokespeople.
- FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ):** Information about SNAP benefits, hunger, nutrition issues, and so forth, including such information as locations of local SNAP offices, the local toll-free number, and extended office hours or online applications.
- GRAPHICS:** Charts on local enrollment trends, participation, or numbers of people who are eligible, but not participating.

STEP 5 | IDENTIFY SPOKESPERSONS

OFFICIAL SPOKESPERSONS

Identify people whom the media can interview about the story. These may be local health experts, nutritionists, grocers, or human services providers. Be sure you have the full name, title, and contact information of these individuals readily available. Be sure that your spokespersons are approved by their organizations to speak to the media, and that they:

- Know SNAP;
- Are available to appear on television or radio and to be interviewed by the print press;
- Are comfortable speaking to media;
- Are able to clearly communicate the point you want to get across;
- Can respond effectively to questions; and
- Will be considered credible, trustworthy sources of information by viewers or readers.

TESTIMONIALS

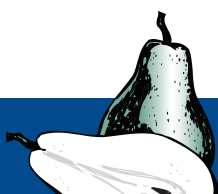
To add a human interest angle to the story, try to find people in your community who would be willing to share their SNAP benefits stories with the media and talk about how the support helped them get back on their feet. Speak to your partners to see if they can help identify someone like this.

Once someone has been selected, make sure the person is comfortable telling his or her story and has a positive experience to share. You will also need to confirm with the media outlet whether or not they have to use the true identity of the person giving the testimonial. A SNAP recipient may be uncomfortable using his or her name; some individuals might want to use an alias and others might want to just use their first name.

STEP 6 | CONTACT THE MEDIA

What are some helpful tips on contacting reporters?

- **Select the most appropriate reporters for your specific story.** Do not bombard reporters with story ideas that are not relevant to the reporter's beat or specialty. For example, if you are pitching a story about the economic benefits of SNAP, contact the reporter on your media list who covers the local economy.
- **Find out how reporters like to be contacted and respect their time.** Ask if a reporter prefers phone calls, e-mail, or news the old-fashioned way — by U.S. mail. Reporters may keep odd hours and juggle several assignments at once. Be respectful of their schedules and how they like to receive information. If you need to send out a press release or media advisory to a mass list rather than individual names, be sure to put e-mail addresses in the blind copy (bcc:) field to avoid sharing e-mail addresses with all the other recipients.



- **Review your talking points before you call reporters.** Have your ideas ready (see page F 3 for a pitch script sample) since most reporters are extremely busy and will give you only a minute or so to make your case before deciding if they are interested.
- **Make sure your e-mail subject line is descriptive but concise.** Include a short (about two paragraphs), catchy pitch along with your contact information. (See sample at the end of this section.) Make the reporter's job as easy as possible by providing the most important information in the first paragraph. Include a link to the SNAP Web page (www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/default.htm), as a reporter will often visit the Web site for insight before calling back.
- **Avoid using all caps or excessive punctuation.** Reporters avoid anything that looks like unsolicited e-mail or "spam." Avoid using attachments when contacting a reporter for the first time, as he or she may suspect the attachment of containing a computer virus. Copy and paste relevant text into the body of the e-mail.
- **Introduce yourself fully on phone calls.** Reference previous conversations, if applicable, to jog their memory as to who you are and why you're calling. Ask whether it is a good time to talk. If they cannot talk, offer to call back later at their convenience. If they have time to talk, get to your point quickly and gauge their level of interest based on the response. If they are not interested, they will let

TIMING YOUR OUTREACH		
TYPE OF OUTLETS	DESCRIPTION	TIMING
MONTHLIES	Monthly publications are typically magazines, often designed to appeal to a particular segment of the community. They are not as focused on time-sensitive news events, and are therefore good channels for communicating "big picture" stories and features.	Stories created for monthlies must often be written 3 to 6 months prior to publication date.
WEEKLIES	Weeklies can come in a magazine or newspaper format, and often are distributed free at grocery stores or other popular community locations.	Plan on contacting weeklies 2 to 6 weeks before you hope to see your story in print.
DAILIES	Dailies are defined as local newspapers that focus on breaking news, although they are also good outlets for in-depth features.	For feature stories, plan on contacting dailies 2 to 3 weeks before you hope to see your story in print.
BROADCAST	Broadcast outlets include television and radio. Broadcast news tends to provide live coverage of news events, and relies on images or audio sound bites to tell the story. Broadcast outlets can also be interested in longer stories, particularly for morning or community shows.	For feature-length stories, contact the producer of the segment you are pitching 2 to 3 weeks before you hope to see your story on the air.



you know.

- **Be reliable.** Nothing will squelch a media relationship faster than a promise you cannot deliver. Do your best to get reporters what they need in advance of their deadlines. However, if you won't be able to come through, let them know as early as possible.
- **Follow up.** Although some reporters will provide coverage after one phone interview, that is frequently not enough. It is important to be in front of reporters on a consistent basis with compelling information that demonstrates what you are pitching is viable, credible, and worthy of coverage. Be sure to offer reporters the additional elements they would need to round out their stories — photos, Web site information, toll-free numbers, listing of local SNAP offices, and additional resources, if necessary.
- **Know when to keep at it and when to let go.** No matter how passionate you are about a story, some reporters will never buy in. A good way to circumvent a quick “no” is to pitch by phone rather than e-mail (unless that is a reporter's preference). This will get you better results and allow you to build the relationships you need to ensure consistent success. When using the phone, leave one message only, and then continue to call at different times of the day until you are able to speak to the reporters. Once you have them on the line, it is much easier to make your case, as you can engage a reporter in a conversation and handle questions or objections as they arise.

WHAT ARE REPORTERS' DEADLINES?

PRINT:

Call a newsroom between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., when reporters are most likely not in planning meetings or working against a 5 p.m. deadline.



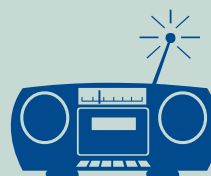
TELEVISION:

Call assignment or planning editors after 10 a.m. and before 3 p.m., but not in the hour or so before a noon newscast. It's best to call the assignment desk after the morning planning meeting, which usually ends between 9:30 and 10 a.m.



RADIO:

Call early, around 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. After that, staff often has planning meetings, but you can start calling again after 10 a.m. News directors, reporters, and producers are often gone by the afternoon.



STEP 7 | EVALUATE

Reviewing and analyzing your media outreach allows you to determine whether you reached your goals and what did and didn't work. It also gives you an opportunity to share your success. The end result need not be an exhaustive report, just some information to help you track your efforts.

How can I chart our media outreach efforts?

- **Set goals before you begin** so that you have something to measure (for example, place one newspaper article or TV story about SNAP benefits, promote the local toll-free number, or increase inquiries about SNAP by 10 percent).
- **Establish a starting point** (known as a baseline), if possible. Take note of how many calls you are getting about SNAP benefits, or how much media coverage you are receiving now. If you do this, you can quantify improvements and increases.
- **Begin your analysis as soon as possible** after your media push or event so that everything is fresh in your mind.
- **Use numbers to paint your success story:** "There was a 50-percent increase in media coverage compared to last year," or, "After our appearance on the local radio show, calls about SNAP benefits increased by 20 percent."
- **Use anecdotal evidence to show your success:** "Many clients remarked that they didn't think they would be eligible for SNAP benefits until they saw the TV story." In addition, use quotes from clients that support your success: "I was surprised to learn that I might still qualify for SNAP benefits even though I have a job."
- **Include information on the reach of a media outlet:** "An article ran in the Anytown News, which has a circulation of 80,000." This information is usually available on the media outlet's Web site.
- **Look at what is said in the media coverage you receive to determine whether you communicated your key points.** If you wanted to convey that every accommodation is being made to help elderly people apply for benefits, did that come across in your story?
- **Make copies of the newspaper articles that include your contributions.** Make sure they are well presented. Keep a file of media coverage that you can easily access.
- **Share articles with partners,** or incorporate articles in a presentation folder for potential partners.

How do I monitor for media coverage?

Following are some quick and easy ways to monitor coverage on a shoestring budget:

- Check the outlet's Web site. Most searches are free for any time up to a week or month.
- If you submitted an announcement to a newsletter or bulletin, ask about distribution numbers, so you get a rough estimate of how many people read your message.
- If you know a TV story will air at a certain time, record the segment.
- To find out the circulation or audience numbers for newspapers and TV, check the outlet's Web site. If you need to call to ask for this information, the advertising department will usually give it to you.



What are some additional media tracking resources?

- **U.S. Newspaper List:** A comprehensive list of State and local media outlets. Once on the site, click on your State and then city for shortcuts to your community papers and television stations. www.usnpl.com/
- **HandsNet:** Offers WebClipper, a reasonably priced service targeted at nonprofits and the human services community. <http://webclipper.handsnet.org/>
- **NewzGroup:** Provides comprehensive statewide press clipping services of all daily and weekly newspapers in Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, South Carolina, Texas, West Virginia, and Wyoming. Basic coverage is about \$100/month. <http://www.newzgroup.com/>
- **Lexis-Nexis:** This is probably the most comprehensive online database of full-text news and magazine articles, but it is also among the most expensive of the available services. www.lexisnexis.com/
- **Google News:** A “beta” (test) offering at the time of this printing, this is a free search engine especially for news stories. <http://news.google.com/nwshp?hl=en+gl=us>

HOW DO I CREATE A FILE OF MEDIA COVERAGE?

1. **Locate** either an online or print copy of the story.
2. **Cut out** or print off the title of the publication (also known as the flag, logotype, or masthead).
3. **Make sure** the date and byline (reporter’s name) are included on the article. If one or the other is not included on the printed version, type the date and byline (sometimes the byline will be “Staff” or “Reuters”) on a separate piece of paper; cut it out.
4. **Lay the components out** on a white, blank piece of paper in the following order: flag, byline, date, and content.
5. **Tape the components** neatly onto your blank paper; make sure the edges are not folded.



10 TIPS FOR CONDUCTING EFFECTIVE MEDIA OUTREACH

- 1 Identify who you want to reach.** Who is your target audience? Do you want to reach all eligible nonparticipants, or do you want to focus on a specific audience, such as seniors or the Latino community?
- 2 Determine the best way to reach them.** Does your target audience read community newspapers? Do they watch TV? What time of day are they watching TV? Do they listen to the radio? Make a list of the relevant media outlets and reporters.
- 3 Set simple objectives.** What do you want to achieve through media outreach? For example, do you want to increase inquiries to the toll-free number, inform people about the nutrition benefits of SNAP?
- 4 Think about the best timing for your story.** Does your news need to be released immediately? Would it be better to wait for a more opportune time such as after the holidays when people are struggling to make ends meet?
- 5 Think about what you want to say.** Formulate the message that you want to communicate to your target audience, e.g., promote toll-free number, extended office hours, the nutrition benefits of SNAP.
- 6 Think about ways to make your story interesting.** Can you get real-life testimonials from SNAP participants? Could a statewide story be tied into your pitch?
- 7 Determine how you are going to communicate your message.** Will you simply call the reporter and provide background information? Do you need to put together a press release or host a press conference?
- 8 Determine who is going to say it.** Do you have people lined up that reporters can speak to, like a SNAP office director, a food bank supervisor, or a nutritionist?
- 9 Be targeted in your media outreach.** Your pitch will be more effective if you reach the right person. Spend some time reading, watching, and listening to the media outlets you will pitch and recent coverage by the reporter you will be contacting. How far in advance do you need to reach out? What time of day would work best? Do reporters prefer e-mail or a phone call?
- 10 Evaluate your results.** Reviewing and analyzing your media outreach lets you know if you reached your goals and what did and did not work. Share your success with others!



CULTURAL COMPETENCY:
A DASH
OF DIVERSITY, A MEDLEY OF OUTREACH IDEAS



CULTURAL COMPETENCY

Section I. The Right Thing: The Importance of Effective SNAP Outreach Across Cultures

What Is Cultural Competence?

Cultural competence refers to how well people understand and interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds. Diversity means not only people of different nationalities, ethnic groups, and religious backgrounds, but also includes gender and age, people with disabilities, as well as the extent to which immigrants have integrated into mainstream American culture.

While there are many definitions of cultural competence, we have chosen to use the following as the foundation for this section of the Outreach Toolkit:

Cultural Competence

is the capacity of an individual or an organization and its personnel to communicate effectively and to convey information in a manner that is easily understood by and tailored for diverse audiences.

What Does This Section Hope To Accomplish?

This section of the toolkit provides suggestions and practical tips, planning tools, and real-life examples of how to make the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program outreach more culturally competent. It is not, however, intended to provide specific strategies and tactics for reaching individuals of distinct races, ethnicities, cultures, or other demographic groups.

Why Should Outreach Workers Care About Being Culturally Competent?

By using language and materials that are tailored for specific target groups, outreach workers improve communication with clients for better customer service. Ultimately, their jobs are easier, more productive, and more fulfilling. Culturally competent communication allows outreach workers to:

- Spend more time providing services and less time trying to clarify confusing or misunderstood information.
- Decrease the level of stress and anxiety for themselves and clients.
- Reduce the likelihood of errors on applications and other important paperwork.
- Increase the level of trust with clients and improve overall satisfaction with SNAP.



Why Is Cultural Competence Important for SNAP Outreach?

The need to reach diverse audiences is greater now than ever before. The U.S. population is changing, and communities today are more racially, ethnically, culturally, and economically different. By the year 2030, the Census Bureau reports that 40 percent of the U.S. population will describe themselves as members of racial and ethnic groups other than non-Hispanic and White.

A recent report on participation rates by various demographic characteristics shows that more than half of all individuals receiving SNAP benefits are non-White:

- More than 33 percent or one-third of participants are Black or African-American.
- Nineteen percent are Hispanic.
- Another 4 percent belong to other races or ethnic groups.

Still, not everyone who is eligible for SNAP takes part in the program. Participation among target populations continues to be low. This is especially true among Hispanics and the elderly:

- About 51 percent of the eligible Hispanic population participate in SNAP.
- Only 30 percent of the elderly who are eligible for SNAP actually participate.

What Are the Implications of Not Being Culturally Competent?

Given the current and projected demographic changes in the United States, outreach providers must take the Nation's increasingly diverse and complex backgrounds into account when conducting SNAP outreach in order to be effective in reaching as many eligible people as possible.

Outreach workers who are not culturally competent are less effective or successful when conducting outreach due to potential miscommunications and misunderstandings. A small amount of time invested up front in learning to communicate effectively with diverse groups, especially those groups that the office serves frequently, will pay off with more efficient time management, better customer relations, and improved participation in SNAP.

SNAP is a nutrition assistance program that enables families to supplement their food budget so that they can buy more healthful food, such as vegetables and fruits. A healthy diet and physical exercise are important. An increasing number of studies and reports, such as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Healthy People 2010 (www.healthypeople.gov), cite poor nutrition as a leading contributor to diseases that disproportionately affect minorities and low-income populations. Consider these other facts:

- Obesity among low-income Americans is linked to having limited or uncertain access to nutritious and safe foods.
- People living in rural areas are more likely to be older, poorer, and less healthy than people living in urban areas.
- Obesity continues to be higher for African-American and Mexican-American women than for non-Hispanic and White women.
- The prevalence of high blood pressure in African-Americans is among the highest in the world.



Myths About SNAP

Myth: “I work every day. SNAP benefits are for people who are unemployed or who can’t work.”

Fact: Many SNAP users are employed full-time yet need extra help to afford more nutritious foods.

Myth: “I can’t buy the types of food my family eats with SNAP benefits.”

Fact: Most grocery store chains and even some small specialty or “corner” stores and farmers markets accept SNAP benefits. What’s most important is that there are very few foods that you cannot purchase with SNAP benefits; examples of items that may not be purchased are alcohol, pet food, and hot, prepared foods.

Myth: “I refuse to be on welfare. Only welfare recipients receive SNAP benefits.”

Fact: SNAP is a nutrition assistance program, which is not the same as welfare. Participants do not have to receive welfare to be eligible for SNAP benefits.

Section II. Getting To Know Your Community: How To Conduct a Needs Assessment

What Is a Needs Assessment?

A needs assessment is the process of gathering and examining information to get a clearer and more accurate picture of an issue, challenge, or environment. In this case, the needs assessment will help you better understand the diverse community in which you want to conduct SNAP outreach. This information is gathered through a series of carefully crafted questions that will likely be asked of individuals inside and outside of your organization so that you can get a number of different opinions. The results can be presented as a formal report or an informal document—the key is to summarize the findings accurately.

Reaching Diverse Audiences: You Know You Are Being Effective When...

- Your staff reflects your client population, or target client population, in racial and cultural makeup and language.
- Your staff is aware of and demonstrates the behaviors, attitudes, and skills that enable them to work well across cultures.
- You work with organizations that are directly involved with the diverse communities you need to reach.
- You have relationships with ethnic or minority media in your community.
- Your outreach includes varied approaches to sharing information with individuals with disabilities.
- You use translation and interpretive services to meet the language needs of your clients.
- Print materials are easy to read and meet the sixth grade literacy level. Print materials include picture and symbol format, as needed.
- Materials are available in different formats, such as video and audiotape and enlarged print.



Why Is a Needs Assessment an Important Part of SNAP Community Outreach?

A needs assessment will help you better understand the challenges facing underserved communities and the barriers that potential clients face in applying for SNAP benefits. It allows for a more indepth and unbiased look at the problem from a wide range of people. This information can provide new insights and answer questions you may have, such as:

- What do we know about the local needs for SNAP outreach?
- Are we reaching out to the neediest groups?
- Which organizations in our community are conducting SNAP outreach, what services do they provide, and how are these services funded?
- Do various groups understand who is eligible for SNAP benefits?
- Which media are most credible among our target populations?
- How do we establish and maintain trust?
- How can we strengthen the effectiveness of current community outreach activities?
- Do our materials appeal to multicultural audiences?
- Are our materials in the appropriate languages? At the sixth grade reading level?
- Are we maximizing relationships with influential people and organizations to reach diverse communities?

Having the facts in hand enables you to set specific goals, develop tailored plans of action, and determine the best use of limited resources. Once you know and understand your audience, it is easier to develop strategies to reach them.

Reasons To Conduct a Needs Assessment

- To learn how other organizations, such as community-based groups or your local SNAP office, might support your outreach efforts.
- To get tried-and-true suggestions that worked with other programs.
- To get insight into what your target audience really thinks and believes about SNAP benefits.
- To help set goals and measure success.
- To understand basic statistical and other information about the needs in your community and the gaps between services and needs in order to identify appropriate strategies to address them.



*How Do I Get Started?***STEP 1****CONFIRM/IDENTIFY THE COMMUNITY FOR WHICH YOU WANT TO CONDUCT THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT.**

Through your day-to-day activities, you may have a clear understanding of the population in your community.

If you are new to your position and are not sure which groups to reach, there are many sources that can help you create profiles of key populations in your area to identify which group(s) you want to conduct the needs assessment on, starting with your State SNAP agency and your city's Web site.

How To Identify the Community You Want To Reach

Start with your State SNAP agency. They may have population profiles of your community. You can find your State SNAP agency at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/map.htm>.

Other sources include:

- The Census Bureau (<http://www.census.gov>)
- The U.S. Department of Labor (<http://www.dol.gov>)

When using demographic information or statistics, be mindful that numbers change. Check yearly or frequently for updates.

- Visit your city's Web site. Here, you'll likely find demographic information on the racial and ethnic groups in your community and average household incomes. If it's not readily available on the Web site, make a few quick phone calls to city agencies requesting the data you want.
- Contact your city's Office on Aging. The Office on Aging should be able to help identify the number of low-income seniors in your community, along with ZIP Code data on where they might reside.
- Contact the local department of education to request schools in your community where large numbers of students receive free or reduced-price lunches. In many cases, they can also provide a profile of the students—their racial/ethnic backgrounds and languages that are spoken.

Could This Happen at Your Organization?

Real life Stories of Culturally Incompetent Interactions.

Ms. G. speaks very little English. She knows she could qualify for social services, such as SNAP and WIC, but finds it very difficult to communicate over the telephone, and is frustrated when she shows up in person because she usually must wait until the only bilingual person in the office is free to assist her. Thus, Ms. G. has to ask a friend or one of her older children to make the call or go with her to the office.

A fixed appointment with a bilingual person is one way to help someone like Ms. G. This way she would avoid long waits, which are often difficult when coordinating schedules with others. The office could also arrange to have its bilingual staff person call Ms. G at home at a scheduled time. This is an opportunity to review the application and identify documents Ms. G would need to provide.



- Contact the local health department and department of social services. Because both of these agencies have specific programs for low-income residents, they can also provide information on underserved groups in your community—where they reside and programs are already in place to serve them.
- Contact your local United Way, whose mission is to help identify community needs and provide funding to support these efforts. The United Way may be willing to share research and other data that it has collected from and about local groups.
- Contact professors or research institutes in local colleges and universities that may be collecting data or conducting research with your target population.

After compiling this information, a careful review should help you confirm the community/communities you want to assess and reach out to.

STEP 2 | REVIEW WHAT YOU ALREADY KNOW.

After choosing the population you want to reach, you may find that you already know something about how to reach them with information about SNAP. In fact, you may be aware of many possible solutions. But it's important to go through the process. Ask yourself:

- What other organizations have similar goals and might be willing to work with us to address this need? Don't forget to include your local SNAP office.
- What resources (staff, in-language support, materials) do we have but may not be fully using?
 - Has any research been conducted that highlights effective ways of reaching the target population within the community? Can we rely on other work to give us insight and answers?

You may wish to have more than one person in your organization complete the questions to get different opinions and a range of responses.

STEP 3 | DRAFT THE QUESTIONS YOU WANT TO ASK.

Asking the right questions is the key to getting the information for your needs assessment. Accurate information helps you develop the most effective and culturally competent outreach plan. This is an important step, so

take your time to think broadly about the type of information you need. You may want to invite other groups to join you, including members of the communities you wish to target and representatives from culturally specific organizations, to help draft or to review your list of questions. Ask if someone has already done a needs assessment—you may want to build upon their model. While your questions may be tailored to meet local needs, the following list of questions can act as a guide.



QUESTIONS TO GET THE BALL ROLLING ON A NEEDS ASSESSMENT

1. Which group(s) are you most interested in reaching and why?

2. How many SNAP offices are in your area? Where are they located, and does the location pose a potential barrier (e.g., is it accessible by public transportation)?

3. Are there any linguistic or cultural barriers that prevent individuals from participating in SNAP? What community resources are available to help minimize these barriers?

4. What is happening with your outreach efforts vs. what you would like to happen?

5. What groups are already successfully reaching the population you want to access?

6. Which of their initiatives have been particularly effective and why?



7. Where does the majority of the target population live? Are they clustered in one area or spread out?
-
-
-
-
8. What local organizations and individuals have the greatest influence with the population?
-
-
-
-
9. Do the grocers/farmers markets they patronize accept SNAP benefits? Are they served by public transportation?
-
-
-
-
10. Is public transportation easily accessible in their community? Do public transportation routes reach the local SNAP office and grocery stores? If no, how do people access SNAP and grocery stores?
-
-
-
-
11. Are there existing community events and activities that attract the people you're interested in reaching? Is there a Diabetes Support Group meeting nearby? Is there an annual Cinco de Mayo celebration coming up? What events or activities are popular with your target group?
-
-
-
-
12. What media outlets does this group prefer?
-
-
-
-



13. Is the “word on the street” about SNAP positive or negative? What are the positives and negatives?

14. What types of partnerships would help achieve the outreach objectives?

15. Would these partners be able and willing to provide volunteer outreach workers? If yes, what services will the volunteers provide; what type of training will they need; and how often will be they available?

16. What outreach activities might motivate your audiences to seek more information?

17. How can media and community channels be used most effectively?

18. Are there any other barriers that prevent potentially eligible individuals of this community from enrolling in SNAP? What are the barriers? What can your organization do to help eliminate the barriers?

Could This Happen at Your Organization?

Real life Stories of Culturally Incompetent Interactions.

Mr. M. is an independent, 23-year-old young man with a hearing impairment who uses sign language. He also participates in SNAP. He is able to communicate effectively in most day-to-day situations, but one of his parents or an interpreter usually goes with him on appointments to the doctor, or the Medicaid or SNAP office, because staff cannot communicate with him. Recently, he had an appointment at a SNAP office, but work emergencies prohibited either parent from accompanying him. To make matters worse, it was too late to get an interpreter. Mr. M arrived at the office during an extremely busy time—several clients were already waiting for assistance. Realizing that an interpreter was not available and believing that helping Mr. M would be a lengthy process, the staff immediately brushed him off and asked him to come back later when an interpreter was available.

Unfortunately, no one took the time to ask if Mr. M was comfortable communicating in writing, which he was. Sometimes people assume that individuals with physical disabilities are also developmentally delayed or have limited literacy skills. In addition, if an outreach worker had taken the time to ask if there was someone they could call to help interpret, Mr. T would not have had to make another trip. The night before, he had role-played with his parents on how best to respond to any communication problems. Therefore, a quick telephone call to either parent would have enabled Mr. T to get the information he needed.



STEP 4

IDENTIFY WHOM YOU ARE GOING TO TALK TO.

Once you've created a profile of the group(s) you intend to target and gathered the necessary background information, it's time to speak directly to individuals in the "field." It's these "primary sources" that will help you fine-tune your outreach strategies, avoid potential pitfalls and, hopefully, provide ongoing support. While there are a wide range of people who can participate in the needs assessment, you will want to identify those who will provide the most useful information. Once you've identified the people you want to talk to, revisit the questions to make sure they are appropriate for each group. You may need to reword some questions or eliminate one or two for a specific group.

Examples of influential people:

- Religious leaders
- Representatives of faith-based and community-based organizations
- Business leaders
- Doctors, nurses, and nutrition educators
- State or County SNAP workers
- City, County, State, or Federal workers
- Elected officials at the State and community level
- Schools, teachers, and coaches
- Leaders of age- or race-based or culturally specific organizations that advocate for those groups
- Current SNAP participants
- Opinion/trusted leaders in the identified communities such as promotoras
- People in the community you want to reach, including potentially eligible nonparticipants



STEP 5

DECIDE HOW YOU WILL COLLECT INFORMATION.

Some common and effective methods for gathering information include:

- ***One-on-one interviews*** with influential community members. These are useful if you are working with a small budget and are already knowledgeable in the area.
- ***Written questionnaires*** conducted with influential community members and members of the community at large. While it might be a little more time-consuming to collect and tabulate the data, there are online tools, such as www.surveymonkey.com, that make drafting a well-crafted research instrument easy for the beginner and experienced researcher alike. Graduate students in survey research courses may be willing to help you design, collect, and/or analyze information. Establish relationships with professors in local colleges and universities who could help you with this project.

Additional Techniques for a More Comprehensive Needs Assessment

Your organization's resources will likely dictate the complexity of your needs assessment. With additional staffing and budget, focus groups and/or literature reviews can help fill in remaining information gaps. If you have the budget but not the time, market research firms can help you; www.greenbook.org provides an extensive listing of market research firms.

- ***Focus Groups.*** These are sessions held with small groups of the target audience. A facilitator, who speaks the same language as the participants, will ask specific questions and the responses will be recorded for later analysis. However, getting individuals to participate in a focus group can take time and may require some sort of incentive for participation, such as meals, transportation costs, or childcare expenses. Your partners can play an important role in helping you stay within your budget by locating facilitators and focus group participants. Focus groups with current participants and eligible nonparticipants can help you get a sense of what community members know and feel about SNAP, as well as resources, barriers, and possible solutions. With current SNAP participants, you can explore their motivations for enrolling and where they received information about the program. In contrast, potential participants may be able to share what they've heard about SNAP, any concerns they have, and outreach methods that might be effective.
- ***Literature Review.*** Review existing research about the population of interest and their behaviors, habits, or preferences as they relate to nutrition and/or nutrition programs. The reference desk at your public library may conduct a search for you—free or for very little cost. Of course, many of the documents you're looking for may be found online. Another idea is to seek volunteers at your local university. Often graduate students are looking for research projects to enhance their coursework or gain real-world experience. Another good starting point is the bibliography at the end of this section.



Tips for Maintaining Relationships With Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Partners

- Share information and resources that could support one another's efforts.
- Recognize and respect cultural differences in expressing opinions and in the decisionmaking process.
- Be flexible. Meeting times and locations may need to support childcare arrangements and/or attendance by family members or children.
- Rotate meetings to visit groups located in ethnic and rural communities.
- Be sensitive to the fact that the level of formality associated with meetings, meeting times, conference calls, or other group endeavors may reflect differences in racial, ethnic, or cultural habits, customs, and traditions.
- If hosting meetings, be prepared to provide interpretation and translation services for participants with limited English proficiency or who need accommodations due to disability.
- If chairing a committee, consider including a SNAP participant representing each of the diverse communities you want to reach.

Free or Low-Cost Sources of Information

- Local SNAP office or State SNAP agency
- Local or college library
- Local Census Bureau or Census Bureau Web site (www.census.gov)
- City/County/State health department Web sites and community clinics
- Local United Way or other community funding sources
- Professors in local colleges and universities who conduct research with your target population
- Race-, ethnic-, and/or culturally specific business associations
- Race-, ethnic-, culture-, disability-, and hunger-related advocacy groups



Regardless of the methods you use, the most important part is to listen and respect the insights of people who have access to and understand the populations you want to reach. In the end, your needs assessment will not only ring with a richness that only a diverse, multifaceted group can provide, but will also provide a blueprint for enhancing culturally competent SNAP outreach.

- ▶ The Food and Nutrition Service’s Office of Research, Nutrition, and Analysis (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/research.htm>)

Thinking of Forming a Community Coalition?

Where To Look for Members

Section III. The Right Messengers: Breaking Down Barriers With Community Partners

How Can Community Partners Help Us Reach Diverse Audiences?

One of the key elements of reaching out to diverse audiences about the benefits of SNAP is working with your community partners. Outreach providers who reach diverse groups must extend their reach beyond the walls of their own organizations to other programs with similar missions and services.

Community partners can offer substantive and long-lasting benefits to your organization and to the health of the community. They can:

- Provide cultural perspectives.
- Bring credibility to your efforts.
- Bring expertise in working with the groups you want to target. For instance, they may have knowledge of health and nutrition beliefs and practices, and preferred sources of information and distribution channels.
- Offer help with providing translation and interpretive services or allowing your organization to conduct SNAP prescreening at their offices.
- Bring community resources to support your efforts; for example, access to media, community opinion leaders, or financial and/or in-kind support for costly services such as translation and interpretive assistance.
- Discuss new ways of doing business.
- Assist in efforts to select focus group participants or “pretest” materials (see Section IV, The Right Materials for Diverse Audiences).



Could This Happen at Your Organization?

Real life Stories of Culturally Incompetent Interactions.

Ms. B. takes great pride in her appearance and frequently receives compliments on her choice of clothing and jewelry. On this day, Ms. B walks into the SNAP Office to apply for benefits. She sits down with a caseworker who immediately compliments Ms. B on her outfit. The caseworker goes on to remark how she can't believe someone so well-dressed would need SNAP benefits. Although Ms. B finished her appointment, she left feeling insulted. She could not believe that anyone, especially a caseworker, would stereotype the way SNAP recipients dress. The next day, Ms. B. called the county grievance office to lodge a complaint.

There's an old adage that's well known but not practiced nearly enough: "Don't judge a book by its cover."

Always avoid making assumptions or judgments about people based on outward appearance, or even a few moments of conversation. The USDA prohibits discrimination in all its programs, including SNAP outreach activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, or disability. In this scenario, the caseworker should have refrained from making remarks related to Ms. B's outfit or outward appearance. In Ms. B's case, this was not only a wrong assumption, but one based on stereotypes about race and income. Instead, the case worker should have followed the federally mandated guidelines for outreach as outlined by the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service.

Lastly, some community partners can become ambassadors for your organization within the target communities. Those partners who will be most effective at conveying your program messages will be ones who are already trusted messengers within those communities.

How Do I Identify Community Partners?

STEP 1 | ASSESS THE GAPS IN YOUR PROGRAM.

Are you in regular contact with anyone who works with or has ties to the communities you need to reach? If not, then you'll want to look specifically for partners who are linked to those communities.

STEP 2 | ASK YOUR COLLEAGUES.

Some names of community partners may surface through the needs assessment process. In addition, coworkers, SNAP workers, advisory groups, board members, or other professional colleagues, particularly ones who work with the communities you want to target or are focused on access to health and nutrition information, are good sources for information about possible partners.

STEP 3 | DON'T FORGET YOUR CLIENTS.

Your SNAP clients can be the best source for identifying good community partners. Informally poll several clients about whom they trust for information about issues that matter in the community and, more specifically, about issues such as health and nutrition.

STEP 4 | BROADEN YOUR THINKING.

You'll want to make sure that you are not limiting your potential partnership pool to those organizations or individuals you know or with whom your organization has had a previous relationship. Other reliable sources to check for suitable partners include:



- Internet, including news search engines to see what organizations are quoted in the media
- Nonprofit or charity directories (available at your local library)
- Community and faith-based organizations
- United Way
- Schools
- Local age-, cultural-, or ethnic-specific businesses or professional organizations, such as local Office on Aging; local Office of Asian and Pacific Islanders; or local in-language newspapers (most staff speak English)

More on identifying valuable community partners can be found in the Partnership section of the SNAP Outreach Toolkit:

http://www.fns.usda.gov/SNAP/outreach/pdfs/toolkit/2010/Community/SNAP_community_Chapter02.pdf
http://www.fns.usda.gov/SNAP/outreach/pdfs/toolkit/2010/State/SNAP_state_Chapter02.pdf

“ Community-based organizations can ask partners, such as local or State SNAP agencies, to help develop, copy, or print materials. **”**

How Do I Reach Out to Community Partners?

- Send a letter to potential partners to introduce yourself and your program. For a sample partner letter, see page B 14. Acknowledge their work in the community, and identify the specific audience you need to reach. State your desire to discuss how you might work together. Make sure to include what you want them to respond to or your planned followup to the correspondence.

“Please call me if you are interested in discussing how we might work together...” or,
 “I will call you next week to discuss how we might work together....”

- Telephone potential partners and schedule a convenient time to discuss your suggestions and requests.
- If the potential partner is referred by a colleague, ask him or her to facilitate an introduction.

What Is the Difference Between a Partnership and a Coalition, and What Can One Do That the Other Cannot?

There is strength in numbers. Sometimes that strength lies with just two or three people and other times it comes with 10 or 12. A partnership – typically defined as two or three individuals or organizations coming together to work toward a common goal – is ideal for many organizations. Partnerships are more likely than coalitions to include members who are of like mind and mission. They tend to be much easier to manage. Finally, they reach decisions more quickly and are more likely to stay on point and focused toward reaching a single goal. On the other hand, because of the limited number of individuals, a partnership may not offer a broad representation of ideas. Depending on the project, the workload could be quite heavy.



“ Among diverse populations, surveys consistently reveal that word of mouth, phone calls, or face-to-face communication are the most desired forms of communication. ”

Because coalitions are more structured and tend to meet more regularly, there's a greater opportunity to share ideas, lessons, and resources. Because coalitions often function as work groups, you are also more likely to get in on the ground floor when planning culturally specific activities and events.

Challenges in Working With Coalition Partners

Anytime you are working with a large group, there are bound to be challenges. While the benefits of coalitions certainly outweigh the negatives, you should be aware of the following:

- Larger, better-funded organizations tend to have more experience conducting meetings and outreach and may talk more than those with less experience. Make an effort to engage everyone equally and focus on your topic and goals to maintain control of your meetings.
- People may have had previous bad experiences with other members of the coalition. Encourage participants to focus on the business issues being discussed rather than personal issues.
- Group decisionmaking may require a longer approval process. Propose and agree on an approach for achieving consensus.
- You may have to compromise on some issues. Determine which issues or positions you are willing to compromise on before negotiations.
- Additional workload, meetings, and outside activities can be time-consuming. Consider the members' time and interests when organizing events.



Ways To Ensure Outreach Materials Are Appropriate

Materials Are Culturally Competent When They...

- Show respect for the cultural values, beliefs, and practices of the intended audiences both in content and graphics.
- Contain straightforward messages and are free from idioms, clichés, and colloquialisms that the intended audience may not be familiar with or understand.
- Convey the intended concept in a manner that is meaningful to the target audience. Some words or ideas are more difficult than others to get across, especially in translation. For instance, in other languages the concept of SNAP benefits must be conveyed, rather than translating the actual words. Use your community partners or a translation service, if needed, to make sure that the message you are trying to convey is on target.
- Do not lay blame or use guilt or negative stereotypes to get the point across.
- Are readily available in the preferred language or medium of the target audience.
- If appropriate, use pictures and symbols to simplify messages for low-literate audiences.
- Use large and/or bold type for seniors or people who are visually impaired.
- Depict the family and community as primary systems of support and intervention. To achieve greater efficiency, use pictures of persons and families that reflect the community you are trying to reach. If you are depicting activities, illustrate an activity that your target group is familiar with and enjoys.

In general, organizations that make ideal partners are ones that have been in the community for a while, providing services or offering programs to similar populations. Selecting appropriate partners is important as it improves the likelihood that there will be shared vision, as well as desire and appreciation for ensuring cultural and linguistic competence and success.

What Groups or Individuals Should I Consider for Potential Partners?

The needs assessment process should provide guidance here, as well as the Partnership section of the SNAP Outreach Toolkit. Consider:

- Local SNAP office or State SNAP agency
- Schools or colleges
- Fraternities and sororities
- Disease-specific organizations or age-specific organizations at senior centers



- Faith communities. Many religious institutions have specific programs designed to meet community needs, such as health-related ministries, soup kitchens, or senior services.
- Community-based organizations, such as the local job training center, adult education and/or English as a Second Language program, health clinic or recreation center
- Local or national ethnic/minority media outlets including in-language cable television and radio
- Ethnic business associations, such as the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the Black Chamber of Commerce

Promising Practices/Examples of Partnerships

Partnerships can be extremely effective, even among groups that don't agree on some issues; our common points are far more numerous and powerful than our differences.

Larry Goolsby, American Public Human Services Association

We have quite a few helpful volunteers from local credit unions. Their customer service skills are great, and they're used to helping people complete applications.

Teresa Kunze, FNS Outreach Grantee

Catholic Charities of Wichita, Kansas

Faith-based groups sometimes get church volunteers to go door-to-door talking to those they imagine could use a service or program.

Jean Beil, Catholic Charities USA

Tips for Success When Working With Minority Media

- Use statistics about SNAP that are relevant to your target audience.
- Be prepared with SNAP information and other supporting materials. Minority media often work with much smaller staffs and may ask you to provide photographs and background materials.
- Check with each media outlet on whether or not they need information in English or translated. Some will translate for you, but not always.
- Identify and offer culturally appropriate spokespersons, including community leaders and trusted people such as religious leaders. Don't forget about the director of your local SNAP office.
- Include tips and educational information about how to use the program.



We partner with the traditional organizations, like senior centers. But we also work with grocery stores and apartment complex managers. We make it a priority to free up our outreach workers so they can attend community meetings, whenever they happen.

Ana Paguaga, FNS Outreach Grantee

Greater Waterbury Interfaith Ministries, Waterbury, CT

Give partnerships a chance to work; invest time to develop trust.

Nicole Christensen, FNS Outreach Grantee

Food Change, New York City

Fostering of partnerships is difficult, however, vitally important. Partnerships are beneficial for agencies, especially to underserved populations and community organizations that work with these populations. As for Vietnamese Social Services, it has a positive effect and brings growth to our Somali, Vietnamese, and Burmese immigrants and refugees.

Thao Dao, FNS Outreach Grantee

Vietnamese Social Services

The best tool is the power of the relationship.

Jose Humphreys

Esperanza USA

Section IV. The Right Materials for Diverse Audiences

How Are Materials Important in SNAP Outreach?

Once you have identified your target audience and have community partners on board to help you, one of the next steps is to make sure you have the materials to conduct outreach. Your materials must tell the story—that there is a program that can help individuals and their families with their unique nutrition needs.

What Culturally Competent Materials Already Exist?

A wealth of translated SNAP information—from forms and brochures, to flyers and fact sheets—is available on the FNS Web site. To view translations and to print out the materials, visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/translations.htm>. Also, be sure to check out your local SNAP office to see what materials are available.



How Do I Go About Creating My Own Culturally Competent Materials?

Materials should be tailored to reflect the demographics and cultural backgrounds of the intended audience. This should be evident in how they look, what they say, and the manner in which actions and people are depicted. As a rule of thumb, keep information simple and be sure to provide a description of the program, how to get it, where to ask for help, and where to use the benefits.

Is There a Way To Test Materials To Make Sure They Are Culturally Competent Before I Use Resources for Reproduction and Distribution?

Yes. That's where your community partners can help! Call on their expertise and ask them to review draft materials and point out areas that could be problematic given the intended audience. Also, partners can assist by helping to assemble small groups of the intended audience to test materials for unbiased feedback. This may seem a bit time-consuming on the front end, but it can go a long way in mitigating costs associated with "fixing" inappropriate materials later on. Keep in mind that some feedback about the materials may have more to do with preferences than possible barriers. For example, while paper quality or brochure colors are important considerations, your goal in testing for cultural competence is to identify wording, graphics, or other content that could be a barrier to someone understanding or taking part in your program.

How Can I Find Good, Reliable Translation Services on a Shoe-String Budget?

If you are trying to reach a certain segment of the population because of their predominance in the community and need for service, chances are other organizations and programs are, too. Local universities and colleges, community partners, and other neighborhood programs and services are all good resources for obtaining low-cost translation and interpretive services.

What Is the Best Way To Ensure That My Materials Reach the Intended Audience?

The importance of the mode of delivery cannot be overstated when communicating health messages to certain audiences. Through your needs assessment, you identified trusted messengers or sources of information about food and nutrition. In your community, these sources could be peers, elders, spiritual leaders, business leaders, or medical professionals. They can help distribute materials or steer you toward appropriate distribution points. Grassroots outreach through faith-based organizations may also play a critical role in reaching intended audiences, particularly in African-American, Asian, and Hispanic communities, where churches and related organizations often play a central role.

Knowing the preferred language will help you decide whether or not to *transcreate* or adapt your materials or to provide information in alternative formats, such as large print, Braille, or video.



What Are Some Other Ways of Reaching My Target Audience?

Don't rely solely on written materials to get the word out! Printed materials are the least preferred mode of communication—and that goes for most Americans today. Among diverse populations, surveys consistently reveal that word of mouth, phone calls, or face-to-face and peer-to-peer communications are the most desired forms of communication. Consider asking volunteers from partnering organizations to help spread the word. Public service announcements (PSAs) are another way to get free publicity for your program. Most stations will run a select number of PSAs at no cost; however, there is stiff competition for airtime. There is no guarantee that your ad will be chosen and, if it is, that it will air during a time when your target audience(s) is listening or watching. Generally, paid advertisements are run during the most desirable time slots.

- By participating in community events, such as health fairs, supermarket openings, or anniversary promotions, your chances of reaching large numbers of people are pretty good. But you'll still need to check beforehand to make sure that the event reaches the population you want to connect with, and that it is usually well-attended and conducive to disseminating SNAP information. A block party or festival with loud music might be popular with the intended audience and well-attended, but at the end of the day, you'll probably find most of your materials on the ground or in the trash. Look to your community partners, clients, and even event organizers for help to identify the most worthwhile events.
- Another way to personally touch clients and individuals who are potentially eligible for SNAP benefits is by using the promotora model. Promotora, the Spanish word for “promoter,” is a model for outreach that uses a lay worker who lives in the targeted community to educate residents. Their expertise? The knowledge they have of the community rather than their formal education, and the established level of trust they have with residents—something an “outsider” would have difficulty gaining—coupled with some basic training in a specific health issue or SNAP outreach. The promotora model can use both male and female outreach workers, depending on the target population, and can be successful in reaching all minority communities, particularly immigrants.

Could This Happen at Your Organization?

Real life Stories of Culturally Incompetent Interactions.

For the past 2 years at the Henson Community Health Fair, Maria has talked with Mr. Williams, who stops by her table with his son to talk about SNAP and whether or not she thinks he might be eligible. Each year, Maria invites Mr. Williams to have a seat at her table, where she gives him an application and asks him to read and complete it to get the process started. But Mr. Williams says he's in a hurry--his son has football practice--and that he doesn't have time to do it right here, but that he'll fill it out at home and mail it back to the office in the next few days. Maria never hears back from Mr. Williams, that is, until the next year's health fair where he hangs around her table asking for the same information.

Reluctance in filling out paperwork or signing documents can be a sign that an individual may have difficulties with reading, writing, or comprehension. This can be hard to spot because often they will go to great lengths to avoid the embarrassment of asking for assistance. For instance, Mr. Williams was trying to find out as much information as he could without having to read anything, and he had a good excuse for not filling out the application onsite, where his problem might have become apparent. Some people even carry around newspapers and magazines to throw off anyone who might be suspicious.

To help the individual, and most importantly avoid causing embarrassment, outreach workers can acknowledge that the process can get overwhelming and offer to go over a brochure with the person—point by point—or read through the application—question by question—and write the answers, if necessary. This presents a win-win situation—it meets the goals of both the outreach worker and the individual, in an efficient, professional, and respectful manner.



Section V. Getting to the Root of It: How To Work With Minority Media

What Are Minority Media?

Today there is an abundance of media outlets that specifically target one or more ethnic populations, races of people, or age groups. Local demographics typically will drive the need for and preponderance of minority media in a given geographic area. In the case of media that target African-Americans and Hispanics, there are well-established outlets in most big cities and urban areas across the country. Asian media are emerging in those same areas, as well. Building relationships with media that specifically target your audience can be important to communicating the benefits of SNAP.

Why Is it Important To Use Minority Media?

Minority media are another trusted messenger for reaching diverse audiences about SNAP. Minority media highlight news and events of particular importance to their audience. In addition, in-language media provide an invaluable service for those who do not speak English. Further, minority media personalities tend to be well-respected and credible sources on issues that affect their community. Minority media are also more likely to use public service advertising and news that target their audience. Topics concerning health and education are of primary importance for the audience as well as the media.

I Know Radio and Television Are Popular Media, but What About Newspapers and Magazines?

Print outlets, like newspapers and magazines, are still a very popular medium for older people across all racial and ethnic groups. For some cultures, newspapers are also a link to the community and to the country of origin and serve as a resource guide. Print also allows for further explanation of topics that cannot be fully covered on radio or television.

How Should Facts and Figures Be Presented to Minority and Targeted Media?

It's okay to use statistics, but do not rely on facts and figures alone to tell your story. Prove your story's relevance to your target audience. Make sure your statistics and data focus on the target audience, as well. Keep in mind that sources and spokespeople should be credible with groups you are trying to reach. If possible, bring statements from community leaders as testimonials for your story and consider including real-life examples of how the program can be used.

Beyond Sending Out Materials Regularly to Media, How Else Can I Build Relationships With Minority Media in My Area?

You may find that editors and staff at many minority media outlets are actively involved in the community and sit on numerous committees and local boards. In short, they make great advocates for your organization beyond today's story.

How Can I Find the Minority Media in My Area?

To ensure that your media contact list is up-to-date on minority or targeted media in your area, go to your local library or check online for media directories, such as Bacon's, or do a general Internet search. It's also worthwhile to go into the communities you want to reach and check out what free papers are available—ethnic supermarkets and restaurants are a good place to pick up a few—or visit a local newsstand for a broad range of local media. Chambers of Commerce may also have information about local media.



Steps for Working With Minority Media

STEP 1 | IDENTIFY MEDIA OUTLETS

Outlets should be those with readers or listeners who represent your target audience.

STEP 2 | UNDERSTAND WHAT IS NEWSWORTHY

Stories that are newsworthy to minority media will have a sense of immediacy and offer fresh, new information that will impact their audience's lives.

STEP 3 | DEVELOP STORY ANGLES

One story can be presented from different perspectives, which will make it more appealing to the media and their audiences.

STEP 4 | PITCH YOUR STORY TO REPORTERS

Decide how best to present your story—in a press release or letter. For examples of both, look at the Outreach Toolkit at:

http://www.fns.usda.gov/SNAP/outreach/pdfs/toolkit/2010/Community/SNAP_community_Chapter02.pdf

STEP 5 | FOLLOW UP!

This is an important step to getting your story covered in mainstream or minority media given the amount of information most media outlets receive and the ever decreasing number of reporters available to cover stories.

Kernels of Wisdom:

I participate on a weekly talk show for the Haitian community. It's a 20-minute question- and-answer, call-in show that has a cultural theme each week. My job is to tie that theme into a nutrition-focused topic.

SNAP Outreach Grantee

We cover everything that affects and benefits the Hispanic community. We are always interested in initiatives that benefit the Hispanic community. Personally, I prefer receiving information via e-mail. And we always appreciate good quality photos.

Mary Aviles, Hispanic editor, EFE News Service (national news agency)



Recently, we've been covering stories about how Hispanics are the minority group that's been able to overcome poverty the fastest, according to studies. I think there needs to be more education on the program. There are families that qualify for SNAP, and yet don't take advantage of it. Others don't take advantage of their right because they're scared they'd draw criticism and that they'd be labeled as lazy and as irresponsibly having too many kids.

Jose Carrera, El Dia (Houston)

Our biggest pet peeve is old news. We also don't like it when we are given little time before an event. We value information that affects the Hispanic community: education, crime, etc. Sometimes we get information that is unrelated to Chicago or to Hispanics.

Arely Padilla, reporter, La Raza (Chicago)

Almost all our reporters are native Chinese speakers, and some may not speak English well or at all. Therefore, we prefer translated, in-language fact sheets and releases.

Emerson Chu, Southern Chinese Daily News (Houston)

If organizations have big presence in our communities, then we are more likely to cover news about that organization. By participating in our events and supporting our communities, they will appear credible, trustworthy, and recognizable in our particular ethnic community. Consequently, our community will be more interested in their news.

Yunju Choi, News Korea (Dallas)

A story doesn't have to apply exclusively to Asian communities to be relevant to our publications. It can be a story that affects populations regardless of ethnicity, but if it is somehow relevant to our ethnic communities, our readers may well be interested.

Abelardo Mogica, Philippine Mabuhay News (National City)

While we cover news that is relevant to the Asian community, we prefer to get news that is specifically relevant to our target nationality group. As a Japanese publication, our ideal news relates to the Japanese population specifically.

Jacob Marolies, Yomiuri Shimbun, (New York City)



Section VI. Culturally Competent + Customer Service: Two Peas in a Pod

The focus of this toolkit is on outreach, but really that is only the first step in ensuring that more diverse audiences participate in SNAP. Outreach efforts can be undone in a matter of seconds with a negative encounter at the first point of contact with SNAP. If individuals or families are met with insensitivity, lack of courtesy and respect, bias, or even discrimination, we may lose a potential participant.

After a negative encounter, clients may experience:

- Feelings of being unwelcome, unwanted, and not valued
- Fear of further contact with the office or agency
- Fear that complaining about negative experiences with staff will compromise service or benefits
- Anger, frustration, and insult. Thus, they may refuse to initiate further contact.
- Confusion about completing paperwork, following instructions or next steps because clients did not understand acronyms used by an eligibility worker.

After a negative encounter, organizations may experience:

- Loss in time and resources due to missed appointments or errors on paperwork
- Loss of clients due to negative first impressions or word-of-mouth
- Frustrated staff due to lack of training and knowledge of appropriate ways to handle certain situations
- Possible filing of a grievance or report of discrimination based on a bad experience with a first point of contact

Steps for Being Culturally Sensitive in the Application Process

- Support and obtain professional development and training for frontline and eligibility staff on diversity and cultural and linguistic competence. Share articles and other materials that will help in this effort.
- Emphasize customer service and courtesy. Accurate information should be provided in a respectful and timely manner.
- Ensure that everyone is aware of outside resources that may exist, and how and when it is appropriate to access those resources.
- Develop written guidelines for handling situations that are procedural in nature, such as accessing TTY or language-line services and interpreters.



- Train and retrain frontline workers on your agency's policies and procedures regarding communication issues, such as serving individuals who speak little or no English.
- Identify bilingual staff or those who have an affinity with other cultures in your agency who can make a connection with individuals whose primary language is not English.
- Train and retrain frontline workers on how to serve individuals who have special communication challenges, such as a limited literacy level.
- Do not assume that supervisors are knowledgeable about the behaviors, attitudes, and skill sets necessary to work effectively with diverse populations. They may also need training.
- Consider cross-training with an organization that can teach you about a specific culture. In return, you can teach them about the SNAP application process so they can relay this information to their constituents.

Quick Tips for Communicating With Clients and Families

At the heart of cultural competence is learning to communicate effectively with individuals and their families. Here are a few tried and true suggestions:

- When working with people different from yourself, it's important to put your own personal biases aside. Keep an open mind and don't jump to conclusions. Because a person speaks with an accent does not mean they are not a native-born citizen. Take time to learn about the person you are speaking with, which demonstrates respect and an understanding of cultural competency.
- Establish rapport. In many cultures, it is important to establish some type of relationship before discussing business. Taking a few extra moments to ask questions and learn more about an individual and his/her family often makes an enormous difference in the long run.
- While developing rapport, refrain from discussing topics, such as personal relationships, or behaviors that may be misinterpreted. As a practice, avoid making jokes or displaying questionable posters or artwork in your office or workspace.
- If you don't know what their native language is, use the "I Speak" document available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/translations.htm>, which lists, in 34 different languages, the words "I Speak." Give this document to your clients so they can point out for you which language they speak when they spot it.
- Respect personal space. When you first meet with potential clients, ask them to sit where they feel the most comfortable. This will allow people to choose the personal distance that makes them most comfortable. Similarly, refrain from casually tapping or touching someone, which in some cultures can be perceived as being too familiar.



- Identify the decisionmaker. Find out who the influential parties are and how they make decisions. It may be important to ask, “Do you want to discuss SNAP with other members of your family?”
- Send a message through children but do not use children as interpreters. For many parents who don’t speak English well, their children often serve as conduits for information. They can take home what they received in school—for instance, information on summer programs or SNAP. However, some caution must be taken if a parent brings a child to a meeting to serve as an interpreter. Children may be able to informally convey casual conversation points. However, eligibility for a government program is different. Children may not understand the meaning of technical words such as income and resources. Also, parents may not feel comfortable discussing certain information such as household income in front of their children.
- Ask questions and listen to the answers. Asking questions shows that you really are interested in what a person has to say and his or her perspectives. But pay attention. Do not interrupt your client or try to put words in his or her mouth.
- Check for understanding. In some cultures, people are reluctant to ask questions of authority figures. Explain that asking for clarification is acceptable—then ask follow up questions to determine whether they correctly understood you. Ask open-ended questions to ensure the information has been adequately understood.
- Learn greetings and titles of respect in other languages that you commonly encounter.
- Write numbers down. People easily confuse numbers spoken in a new language.

Eight Common Mistakes To Avoid

1. Disrupting home and work schedules when conducting education and outreach activities.
2. Dismissing cultural preferences, customs, and traditions when discussing health and nutrition.
3. Assuming others perceive things the same way you do.
4. Getting “right down to business.” In many cultures, socializing is an important first step before discussing business or personal matters.
5. Conducting interviews or discussing personal information in an open setting. Receiving assistance from outside agencies is an embarrassment in some cultures, and may be better discussed behind closed doors.
6. Misreading silence for confusion or lack of knowledge. Allow for a short period of silence or reflection. Rather than asking if the person understood what was discussed, ask open-ended questions as you probe for understanding.



7. Ignoring the importance of such factors as age, gender, or position in family when asking for decisions.

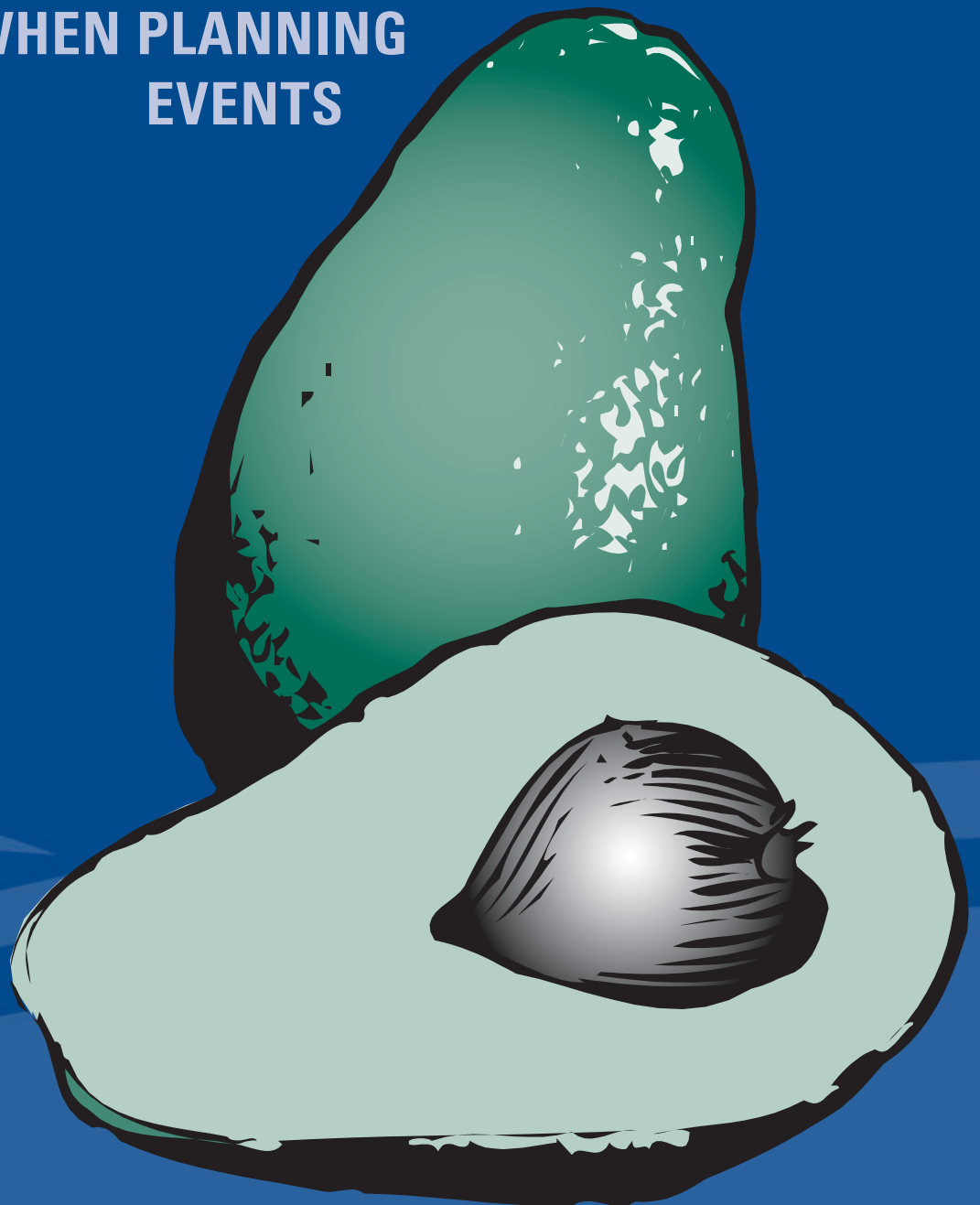
8. Making assumptions based on stereotypes. Examples:

- Ms. L. has a Hispanic surname and speaks with an accent. She arrives for a community-sponsored workshop on how to apply for SNAP. When she approaches the sign-in table and gives her name to the staff person, she is promptly asked to step to the side and wait a moment. The staff person speaks slowly and in a loud voice. Ms. L immediately knows that the staff person assumes she cannot speak English, and has gone to get someone who is bilingual to help out. Although she is pleased that they are making the effort to provide translators for individuals who require this level of language assistance, she wishes they had asked about her specific needs.
- Ms. T is African-American. She stops by the SNAP booth at a citywide festival and asks where in her community she can find out more about applying for SNAP. She notices that instead of asking where she lives, the outreach worker assumes she lives in a predominately African-American section of town and immediately refers her to a location in that area. This infuriates Ms. T because she does not live in that area and must point that out before receiving the correct information.



AVOIDING PITFALLS

**WHEN PLANNING
EVENTS**



MEDIA EVENTS, PRESS CONFERENCES AND INTERVIEWS

When is a media event or press conference appropriate?

Media events or press conferences are used to convey information and attract attention. They allow you to deliver time-sensitive news to many media outlets at once. Because events involve a lot of time, and because attendance and coverage aren't guaranteed, think carefully before you make a decision to move forward.

What should I consider when deciding whether a media event is warranted?

- Is there a visual element to your news? Keep in mind what will look good in a photo or on TV. (Refer to page E 4 for event pictures.)
- Is there an alternative format to deliver your news that would be equally or more effective, such as a press release? Is your event newsworthy, timely, and of interest to the media? (See “Five Components of a Newsworthy Story” on page C 6 of the “Media Outreach” section.)
- Will an event offer reporters special advantages, such contact with as experts, officials, and other important local figures?

What are some examples of things that might warrant an event or press conference?

- Formation of new and important partnerships;
- Opening of a new facility;
- Announcement of a new program;
- Release of an important study or survey; or
- Announcement of the receipt of a new grant.

At what time should I plan the media event?

Check your local calendar listings before planning an event to make sure it doesn't conflict with another major media event. The optimal time to schedule a media event or news conference is 10 a.m. This allows time in the morning for the assignment editor to review the story options for the day and to assign a reporter to your event. Remember, TV and radio producers need time to edit the story for broadcast, and newspaper reporters need time to write.

Consider also that your event might be more successful at certain times of the year, for instance when school's out and children no longer have access to a school lunch program, or around the holidays when people are sensitive to hunger issues.

Where should I have the media event?

The location of your event should be relevant to the issue or story being presented. Hold your event in a central location, near the media, to help facilitate coverage. Take the time to scout your location before you choose it, and visit it a few times again before you host your event. Make sure there is nearby parking for news vans, as crews often carry heavy equipment to and from the event site.

Anticipate what equipment will be necessary and make sure there is adequate space for equipment at your location. If you expect cameras or radio reporters, you must have a podium and microphone. In many cases, television and radio reporters tape their own microphones directly onto the podium. Be sure there is room for a table for press releases, statements, and check-in.



- **Outdoor events:** Consider the weather and noise and arrange for an alternate indoor site.
- **Indoor events:** Think about space. You will need room for TV cameras and other media, guests, and your own audiovisual equipment. Know beforehand where electrical plugs and light switches are located.

Whom should I invite?

Consider inviting community leaders, including the mayor, local council members, or notable nutritionists to speak at a news conference. Work with your local Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program office to select speakers and develop the invitation list. Not only will this make your event more appealing to the media, but it demonstrates that improving nutrition in your area is a community effort.

The media usually take an interest in the human side of an issue. See if you can identify a family that has a positive story to tell about its experience.

How should I invite the media?

The most common way to invite media to a press conference is with a media advisory (see example at the end of this section). The advisory gives enough details about the event to pique an outlet's interest, but not so many that it gives away the entire story.

Send your advisory to the assignment editor or reporter one to two days before your event. On the morning of your event, follow up with the reporter or assignment editor and be sure to include on-site contact information, such as cell phone numbers and exact site location. Assignment desks often do not know whom they will send until the day of the event.

What else do I need to do in advance?

- Prepare signage such as banners and podium signs that can be placed prominently in front of the cameras and photographers. Be sure to properly position signage (you do not want it blocked by speakers, equipment, etc.).

EXAMPLES OF VISUALS

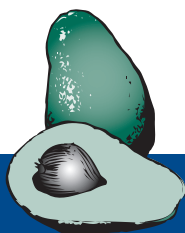
INFORMATIONAL VISUALS

- Pie charts and graphs from new research, such as charts that show the number of people in your area who are eligible for SNAP benefits, but not receiving them.
- Backdrop, like a large sign with the organization name; or the backdrop might be something that conveys information — like shelves of food at a food bank

SYMBOLIC VISUAL

- A table display of healthy foods to demonstrate the foods that a family of four could buy with SNAP benefits in a month.

- Spokesperson(s): Assign one or two spokespersons, such as the head of your organization or a local dignitary, to speak and/or answer media questions at the event. Brief your spokespersons beforehand and make sure they are approved to speak in front of the press. In addition to having official spokespersons, the media will be attracted to a story that puts a human face on the issue of hunger. Because some people may not want others to know they are using SNAP benefits, approach this issue with sensitivity and prudence. Be sure all your spokespersons speak clearly and are easily understood .
- Prepare an agenda. Decide the order of the speakers, the length of their remarks, and who will act as master of ceremonies. Keep each person's remarks to no more than 10 minutes and plan on having no more than three speakers.
- Prepare your press kits. Include the following in your press kit:
 - Agenda
 - Fact sheet
 - Bios of speakers and interviewees
 - Copies of any graphs, charts, and other visuals
 - Photographs
 - Brochures



- List your event in your local community calendars. See the end of this section for an example. Larger cities also have a local Associated Press (AP) office that you can call. Ask to have your event put on their calendar, known as the Daybook. There is a State-by-State listing of AP bureaus at the end of this section.
- Call the press as a reminder prior to the day of the event.

What should I do on the day of the event?

- Set up a table for media and guest sign-in and press kit distribution.
- Greet the guests as they arrive and provide them with assigned seating and other pertinent information.
- Start on time, even if attendance is sparse.

What should I do after the event?

- Send thank-you notes or letters to the guests and special speakers.
- Follow up with media who were not able to attend — ASAP. Send press kits to reporters who couldn't attend the event. Place follow up calls and ask reporters if they are interested in conducting a phone interview with one of the spokespersons.
- Monitor and collect news articles

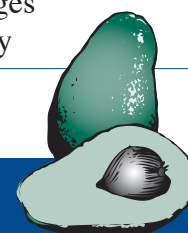
What are some examples of events I could host?

Here are some examples of events to generate coverage of hunger issues and SNAP benefits, as well as simple, inexpensive visuals to use, and spokespersons to offer for interviews.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW STUDY FINDINGS	
LOCATION:	A community center, community or faith-based organization, food bank
INTERVIEWEES:	Head of your organization, mayor, council members, nutritionist, recipients of SNAP benefits
VISUALS:	Graphs and charts

A "DAY IN THE LIFE" GROCERY SHOPPING	
LOCATION:	A supermarket. The idea would be to have local media "shop" for a family of four with a limited budget so they can understand what it is like to buy nutritious food when money's tight.
INTERVIEWEES:	Recipients of SNAP benefits, grocery store manager, nutritionist
VISUALS:	Food, use of the EBT card

COOKING DEMONSTRATION FOR RECIPIENTS OF SNAP BENEFITS	
LOCATION:	A food bank, culinary school, kitchens at schools, faith-based or community center, supermarket
INTERVIEWEES:	A nutritionist, recipients of SNAP benefits, a local dignitary, a chef from a well-known local restaurant
VISUALS:	Good, healthy food being prepared, a nutrition chart, images of people learning about how to eat well and economically



SAMPLE EVENT SETUP

1



1 An eligibility worker with the United Way of New York City helps an individual at a SNAP prescreening event in Chinatown.

Photo credit: United Way of New York City

2



(Spanish)



(English)

2 & 3 FoodChange eligibility workers hold a healthy cooking demonstration at a local grocery store and provide shoppers with information on SNAP.

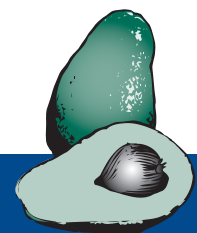
Photo credit: FoodChange



ASSOCIATED PRESS (AP): STATE-BY-STATE LISTING

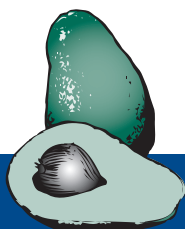
STATE	CITY	PHONE
AK	Anchorage	(907) 272-7549
AL	Montgomery	(334) 262-5947
AR	Little Rock	(501) 225-3668
AZ	Phoenix	(602) 258-8934
CA	Los Angeles	(213) 626-1200
CO	Denver	(303) 825-0123
CT	Hartford	(860) 246-6876
DC	Washington	(202) 776-9400
DE	Dover	(302) 674-3037
FL	Miami	(305) 594-5825
GA	Atlanta	(404) 522-8971
HI	Honolulu	(808) 536-5510
IA	Des Moines	(515) 243-3281
ID	Boise	(208) 343-1894
IL	Chicago	(312) 781-0500
IN	Indianapolis	(317) 639-5501
KS	Topeka	(785) 234-5654
KY	Louisville	(502) 583-7718
LA	New Orleans	(504) 523-3931
MA	Boston	(617) 357-8100
MD	Baltimore	(410) 837-8315
ME	Portland	(207) 772-4157
MI	Detroit	(313) 259-0650
MN	Minneapolis	(612) 332-2727
MO	St. Louis	(314) 241-2496
MS	Jackson	(601) 948-5897

STATE	CITY	PHONE
MT	Helena	(406) 442-7440
NC	Raleigh	(919) 833-8687
ND	Bismarck	(701) 223-8450
NE	Omaha	(402) 391-0031
NH	Concord	(603) 224-3327
NJ	Trenton	(609) 392-3622
NM	Albuquerque	(505) 822-9022
NV	Las Vegas	(702) 382-7440
NY	New York	(212) 621-1670
OH	Columbus	(614) 885-2727
OK	Oklahoma	(405) 525-2121
OR	Portland	(503) 228-2169
PA	Philadelphia	(215) 561-1133
RI	Providence	(401) 274-2270
SC	Columbia	(803) 799-6418
SD	Sioux Falls	(605) 332-3111
TN	Nashville	(615) 373-9988
TX	Dallas	(972) 991-2100
UT	Salt Lake City	(801) 322-3405
VA	Richmond	(804) 643-6646
VT	Montpelier	(802) 229-0577
WA	Seattle	(206) 682-1812
WI	Milwaukee	(414) 225-3580
WV	Charleston	(304) 346-0897
WY	Cheyenne	(307) 632-9351



REGIONAL/STATE RADIO NETWORKS

ORGANIZATION	CITY	STATE	PHONE	FAX	MAIN E-MAIL
Alaska Public Radio Network	Anchorage	AK	(907) 263-7448	N/A	news@aprn.org
Alabama Radio Network	Birmingham	AL	(205) 439-9600	(205) 439-8390	N/A
Arkansas Radio Network	Little Rock	AR	(501) 401-0200	(501) 401-0367	N/A
Pacifica Radio Network	Berkeley	CA	(510) 849-2281	N/A	contact@pacifica.org
Connecticut Radio Network	Hamden	CT	(203) 288-2002	(203) 281-3291	N/A
Florida's Radio Networks	Maitland	FL	(888) 407-4376	(407) 916-7425	news@frn.com
Georgia News Network	Atlanta	GA	(404) 607-9045	(404) 367-1134	N/A
Radio Iowa	Des Moines	IA	(515) 282-1984	(515) 282-1879	Radiolowa@Learfield.com
Illinois Radio Network	Chicago	IL	(312) 943-6363	(312) 943-5109	N/A
Network Indiana	Indianapolis	IN	(317) 637-4638	(317) 684-2008	info@network-indiana.com
Kansas Information Network	Topeka	KS	(785) 272-2199	(785) 228-7282	info@radionetworks.com
Kentucky News Network	Louisville	KY	(502) 479-2222	(502) 479-2231	N/A
Louisiana Network, Inc.	Baton Rouge	LA	(225) 383-8695	(225) 383-5020	N/A
National Radio Network	Framingham	MA	(508) 820-2430	N/A	N/A
Michigan Radio Network	Lansing	MI	(517) 484-4888	(517) 484-1389	miradio@ameritech.net
Minnesota News Network	Minneapolis	MN	(612) 321-7200	(612) 321-7202	newsroom@mnnradio.com
MissouriNet	Jefferson City	MO	(573) 893-2829	(573) 893-8094	Info@Missourinet.com
Mississippi News Network	Jackson	MS	(601) 957-1700	(601) 956-5228	N/A
Northern Broadcasting System	Billings	MT	(406) 252-6661	(406) 245-9755	nbs@northernbroadcasting.com
North Carolina News Network	Raleigh	NC	(919) 890-6030	(919) 890-6024	N/A
North Dakota News Network	Fargo	ND	(701) 237-5000	(701) 280-0861	dakotaneews@qwest.net
Ohio News Network	Columbus	OH	(614) 460-3850	(614) 460-2822	N/A
Oklahoma News Network	Oklahoma City	OK	(405) 840-9489	(405) 858-1435	N/A
Radio Pennsylvania Network	Harrisburg	PA	(717) 221-2883	(717) 232-7612	radiopa@radiopa.org
South Carolina News Network	Columbia	SC	(803) 790-4300	(803) 790-4309	N/A
South Dakota News Network	Pierre	SD	(605) 224-9911	(605) 224-8984	dakotaneews@qwest.net
Tennessee Radio Network	Nashville	TN	(615) 664-2400	(615) 687-9797	N/A
Texas State Network	Arlington	TX	(800) 683-5558	(817) 543-5572	tsn@tsnradio.com
Virginia News Networks	Richmond	VA	(804) 474-0000	(804) 474-0167	N/A
Wisconsin Radio Network	Madison	WI	(608) 251-3900	(608) 251-7233	info@wrn.com
West Virginia MetroNews	Charleston	WV	(304) 346-7055	(304) 346-8262	newsroom@wvmetronews.com
United Stations Radio Network	New York	NY	(212) 869-1111	(212) 869-1115	info@unitedstations.com
USA Radio Network	Dallas	TX	(972) 484-3900	(972) 241-6826	newsroom@usaradio.com



GETTING TO THE CORE

OF MEDIA RELATIONS
AND OUTREACH



HOW TO'S FOR MEDIA RELATIONS AND OUTREACH

The previous sections of this toolkit have mentioned a variety of tools you can use to conduct outreach for increasing participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This section provides the specific, practical information you need to put these tools to use:

- Interviews
- Press releases
- Pitch scripts and letters
- Proclamations
- Media advisories
- Calendar listings

The section that follows will give you the scoop on another very important communication tool — public service announcements.

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWS

Following are interview tips that you or your organization's SNAP spokespersons can use.

Before the Interview

- Know the reporter, publication/program, interview format, and audience. Go online and look up recent articles written by the reporter and ask your colleagues if they know anything about the outlet or reporter.
- Know your goal for the interview. For instance, do you want to publicize a prescreening event? Let people know about your 800 number?
- Know what you want to say. Review the talking points on page 14 of the "Introduction" section.
- Develop 3-5 key talking points to ensure your message is related.
- Jot down likely questions and appropriate answers.

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS



- Buy preparation time by asking to call the reporter back if the deadline allows.
- Establish an "interview atmosphere" and mind-set. Set yourself up in a quiet room with no distractions and have your talking points in front of you. Do not think it's any less formal because it is over the phone.
- Use notes.
- For radio, speak visually — use words to paint pictures. For instance: "The number of hungry people in Pleasantville could fill the football stadium three times over."

TELEVISION INTERVIEWS



- For men, a dark suit and blue shirt works best. For women, avoid solid black or white, and busy patterns. Bright colors are fine.
- Sit erect, but not stiff, and slightly forward in the chair. Unbutton suit jacket when seated.
- Resist the urge to shout into the microphone. Speak and gesture naturally.
- Talk to the reporter or interviewer, not the camera.
- Keep a pleasant expression; smile when appropriate.
- Hold your "interview attitude" from the moment you are lit until the interview is completely over and you are sure the camera is off.



INTERVIEW DO'S



- ☺ Asked about a problem? Talk about a solution. For examples, see the Q&A document in the "Introduction" section on pages 15 and 16.
- ☺ Answer the question you wish they had asked. "Bridge" to a related point you want to make. For example:
 - ♦ **Q:** *Why are so many people going hungry?*
 - ♦ **A:** *It's a complicated issue, but the important thing is that people can get the nutrition support they need through SNAP benefits.*
- ☺ Speak in headlines. Speak in short, succinct statements that will make good quotes. Offer a conclusion first, briefly and directly, and back it with facts or proof points. For example:
 - ♦ *"SNAP has made big changes recently that make it easier to find out about the program. You can call 1-800-221-5689 to learn more about benefits and how to apply."*
- ☺ Speak clearly. Avoid jargon and bureaucratese.
- ☺ Be engaging, likable.
- ☺ Even if a reporter uses a negative statement or slurs, frame your reply as a positive statement.

INTERVIEW DON'TS



- ☹ Do not fake your expertise. If you do not have the answer to a question, assure the reporter you will find and provide the needed facts in a timely manner (please provide an approximate time to expect the call), or offer to assist the reporter in finding another source.
- ☹ Do not overlap the interviewer's question; begin your answer when the reporter is finished.
- ☹ Do not be provoked. Keep cool.
- ☹ Do not lie to a reporter. If you aren't comfortable responding to a particular question, simply say that you have "no comment." However, if you can, refer them to another appropriate source for the information or let them know you will find out for them.
- ☹ Do not over-answer. Short answers are better than long.
- ☹ Do not let false charges, facts, or figures offered by a reporter stand uncorrected.
 - ♦ **Q:** *Why would someone go to the trouble of applying for SNAP if the benefits are only \$10 a month?*
 - ♦ **A:** *On average, monthly benefits vary from \$86 per person to almost \$200 per household. This additional support will help low-income households purchase nutritious foods necessary for a healthy diet.*
- ☹ Do not fall victim to hypothetical situations and "A or B" dilemmas.



MEDIA PITCH SCRIPT

What is a pitch script?

A pitch script is an outline of the key points you need to cover during a phone conversation with a reporter or assignment editor. You can use this pitch script to talk to a reporter before or after sending them a media advisory about an upcoming event.

How much time will I have to make my pitch?

Often you only have 30 - 90 seconds to make your pitch, so you must use them wisely. Practice your pitch aloud once or twice before calling.

Should I read from my script?

No, do not read directly from the script as you talk. The script is to be used as a starting point.

Where can I find SNAP participation data to use in my pitch?

You can find updated participation data on the FNS Web site at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/oane/MENU/Published/SNAP/participation.htm>.

What if the reporter cannot attend?

If the reporter cannot attend, ask if you can send a photograph or perhaps arrange a phone interview with one of your spokespersons afterwards.

PITCH SCRIPT TEMPLATE

Following are two examples of pitch scripts. The ineffective script does not provide the reporter with enough details to cover the event and does not present a case. The effective script politely asks if the reporter has time to talk and efficiently outlines pertinent event information.

INEFFECTIVE PITCH:

"Hi! I just wanted to tell you that Hunger Organization will be holding an event on Monday. The antihunger group works with members of the community to provide SNAP benefits and..."

EFFECTIVE:

"Hello, my name is XX and I am calling from the Hunger Organization. Is this a good time?" [Or, "Do you have a minute?" If not, ask when you can call back.]

"Because XX low-income elderly people in [NAME OF STATE/TOWN/CITY] are living on the edge of hunger, Hunger Organization is kicking off a 'Benefit Bus' tour on Monday to help the older population in [NAME OF STATE/TOWN/CITY] access SNAP benefits without the bother of finding transportation to a local SNAP office.

"This bus tour will span X days and X locations. [Have additional details handy, such as a media advisory, in case you are asked questions about

the event.] SNAP outreach coordinators will be on hand to provide a checklist of all necessary paperwork needed to apply, and to conduct prescreening for benefit eligibility.

"I hope you'll agree that this is something you or your station/paper would be interested in covering. May I fax or e-mail you a media advisory? [Or, I have faxed/e-mailed you a media advisory about this event to provide you with additional information.]"If you have any questions about the event or our program, or need to reach us, my name is XX and my number is XX." [For voice-mail, repeat name and number.]



PITCH LETTER

What is a pitch and what are some examples of a pitch?

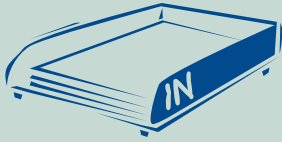
A pitch is contact with a journalist or editor to introduce story ideas or other salient information. “Pitching” most often refers to media outreach efforts to obtain coverage; however, outreach efforts to place PSAs or secure partnerships are also forms of pitches.

WHEN TO USE A PITCH LETTER



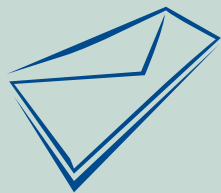
A pitch letter makes the case for covering a specific story, especially a story that is “evergreen” or is not tied to a specific event and can be written at any time.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A PITCH LETTER



More than a phone call, the pitch letter allows you to outline what you are doing and why it is valuable. A good pitch letter (see template on page F 5) has staying power. If it doesn’t generate a story today, it may tomorrow.

THE FORMAT OF A PITCH LETTER



A pitch letter can be used in a variety of formats — mail, fax, e-mail. If you choose to send a pitch letter via mail, put it on your letterhead. The points outlined in the “Developing and Selling the Story” section of this toolkit will also come in handy as you create your pitch letter.



PITCH LETTER TEMPLATE

Dear [NAME OF REPORTER],

Have you ever had to decide whether to buy medicine for your sick child or buy food? Have you ever had to choose between paying the heating bill and having enough food for dinner? Every day, thousands of low-income people in [NAME OF STATE/TOWN/CITY] grapple with issues like these. But they don't have to.

There are XX people living on the edge of hunger in [NAME OF STATE/TOWN/CITY]. SNAP helps low-income Americans purchase nutritious, healthy food. However, only half of those eligible to receive SNAP benefits are currently enrolled.

[ORGANIZATION NAME] is kicking off a SNAP outreach effort in [NAME OF STATE/TOWN/CITY] by *[Describe the activity you would like the media to report on, such as hosting a health fair or prescreening event, volunteering, distributing informational flyers, promoting events, etc., And be sure to use language to get their attention]*. The goal of this outreach effort is to ensure that everyone who is eligible for SNAP knows about it and is able to access benefits.

SNAP is a win-win for low-income families and individuals, as well as for the local economy. By helping them defray the costs of groceries, SNAP benefits allow recipients to purchase more healthy and nutritious food. These benefits also help local retailers and the local community by bringing Federal dollars into the area.

Given some of your recent stories, I thought you would be interested in learning more about our community outreach effort, and I look forward to speaking with you in further detail. I can be reached at (XXX) XXX-XXXX to answer any questions you may have or provide you with background information.

Best regards,

[YOUR NAME]

[TITLE]

[CONTACT INFORMATION]



MEDIA ADVISORIES

What is a media advisory?

A media advisory is a one-page document loaded with information about the who, what, when and where of your planned event — without giving away the entire story.

What goes out first, the media advisory or the press release?

The media advisory is sent in advance of a press release.

What is the goal of a media advisory?

The goal is to get your event on the media’s calendars and planning books. Using your organization’s letterhead, write your advisory in a way that will interest the press, without giving away so many details that they get the full story without having to attend the event.

How do I write a media advisory?

As demonstrated in the template below, begin with a headline that informs the media that something important or “newsworthy” is happening, followed by a secondary heading with additional facts.

When should I distribute the media advisory?

See page C 7 of the “Media Outreach” section for more information on when to distribute a media advisory.

WHAT TYPE OF INFORMATION SHOULD I INCLUDE IN THE ADVISORY?	
WHAT	As in a press release, the first sentence should describe the purpose or “what” of your event in a uniquely newsworthy way. Like your pitch, the media advisory should have a “hook” or angle to get the attention of the media.
WHEN	The “when” section outlines the specific date and time of the event.
WHO	The “who” section lists event attendees in order of prestige — for example, a State official would be featured before a local official.
WHERE	The “where” states the exact address of the event, and includes directions and parking information if necessary.
WHY	The “why” section provides background information for the media, including relevant statistics and a brief description of your organization. This section should also reference other resources, if available, such as a Web site, video clips or radio sound bites.



MEDIA ADVISORY TEMPLATE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: [NAME OF DESIGNATED MEDIA CONTACT]
[(AREA CODE) PHONE #]
[CELL# or E-MAIL]

HUNGER ORGANIZATION TO LAUNCH “BENEFIT BUS” TOUR

*SNAP Prescreening Events at Assisted Living
Complexes Help Low Income Seniors Determine Eligibility*

WHAT: A “Benefit Bus” Tour will hit the streets of Rochester, stopping at assisted living complexes across town to provide low-income seniors with information about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and help them determine whether they are eligible to receive benefits. This is part of an ongoing SNAP outreach effort by Hunger Organization.

WHEN: Tuesday, April 12, and Wednesday, April 13, 2005, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

WHERE: Tuesday: Baywinde Senior Campus
550 Latona Road
Rochester, NY
Wednesday: Gables at Brighton
2001 S. Clinton Avenue
Rochester, NY
*** For directions or parking information, please contact Jane Doe.*

WHO: Bob Smith, Mayor, City of Rochester
Dana Jones, Director, New York State Health Department
Mary Mack, Executive Director, Hunger Organization
SNAP Outreach Prescreeners, Hunger Organization

WHY: Hunger is an important issue in this community, and Hunger Organization is working to ensure that Rochester residents who are eligible for SNAP know about it and are able to access SNAP benefits.

As the cornerstone of the Nation’s nutrition assistance safety net, SNAP helps low-income families and individuals purchase nutritious and healthy food by providing much-needed temporary help.

Visit www.hungerorganization.org and/or www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach.htm
for additional resources.



SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY: HUMAN SERVICES COALITION OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

MEDIA ADVISORY
September 23, 2002
For Immediate Release

Contact(s): Terry Coble, Policy Director
305-576-5001, ext. 17 / 786-473-9936 (cell.)
terryc@hscdade.org
Daniella Levine, Executive Director
305-576-5001 Ext. 19 / 305-467-4015 (cell.)
daniellal@hscdade.org
Human Services Coalition of Miami-Dade County

“Measuring and Overcoming Poverty in Miami-Dade County” Miami leaders announce a new campaign to help families achieve economic independence

What income does a family in Miami need to meet basic needs? What types of subsidies and supports are in place to help Miami families make ends meet? What is being done to help lift the earnings of low-income working families in Miami?

These are the kinds of questions that will be answered at a briefing to release a report on the cost of living in Florida and to kick off a campaign to help Miami families on their path to economic security.

The briefing will be held at:

**10:00 a.m., Tuesday, September 24, 2002
South Florida Workforce Little Havana One Stop Career Center
3525 NW 7th Street
Miami, FL
305-643-6730**

Briefing speakers will discuss:

- The findings of The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Florida report.
- The launching of the **Greater Miami Prosperity Campaign** and the **Food Stamp Outreach to Working Families** project to increase the use of the Earned Income Tax Credit and Food Stamps to lift families towards economic self-sufficiency.

Speakers will include:

Diana Pearce, Researcher and Report Author, University of Washington
Honorable Manuel A. Diaz, Mayor, City of Miami
Hon. Eric M. Bost, Under-Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture
Hodding Carter, President and CEO, John S. & James L. Knight Foundation
Peter W. Roulhac, Chair Elect, Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce
Daniella Levine, Executive Director, Human Services Coalition of Dade County
Maureen Golga, Self-Sufficiency Project Organizer, Wider Opportunities for Women

Sponsors of this event are: Human Services Coalition of Dade County, the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, and Wider Opportunities for Women, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit.



**SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY:
COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM FOR MADISON COUNTY, INC.**



*Helping People
Help Themselves*

3 East Main Street
P.O. Box 249
Morrisville, NY
13408
315-684-3144
800-721-2271
Fax: 315-684-9650

112 Center Street
P.O. Box 384
Canastota, NY
13032
315-697-3588
800-280-4717
Fax: 315-697-3690

6 Cambridge Avenue
P.O. Box 249
Morrisville, NY
13408
315-684-7862
866-684-7862
Fax: 315-684-9940

Working Solutions
1286 Upper Lenox
Ave.
Oneida, NY 13421
Located in the
Wal-Mart Plaza

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 384
Canastota, NY
13032
(315) 363-2400

Community Action Program for Madison County, Inc.

www.capmadco.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Terri Granger
Outreach Coordinator
Phone: 315-684-7862
Fax: 315-684-9940

OUTREACH SITES SET AS HOLIDAYS DRAW NEAR

Morrisville, NY – Community Action Program for Madison County, Inc. in conjunction with Madison County Department of Social Services have set the following dates and locations for Food Stamp Outreach. Those who are interested in applying for Food Stamps, or inquiring about other programs, may do so at these locations.

Thursday, December 4, 2003

9:00 – 12:00 noon

CazCares, Cazenovia, NY

Tuesday, December 9, 2003

10:00 – 1:00

DeRuyter Free Library, DeRuyter, NY

Thursday, December 11, 2003

2:00 – 4:00

Hamilton Food Cupboard, Hamilton, NY

Wednesday, December 17, 2003

11:00 – 1:00

Brookfield Baptist Church, Brookfield, NY

Representatives from Community Action Program for Madison County, Inc. and Madison County Social Services will be available to assist all who are interested in applying.

For more information, contact Terri Granger at 315-684-7862 ext. 23.

Community Action Program for Madison County, Inc. (CAP), one of more than 1,100 Community Action agencies throughout the U.S., has four accessible offices throughout Madison County. CAP is working to alleviate poverty and empower low-income families in order to improve their quality of life. Driven by a mission that focuses on helping people help themselves to achieve their fullest potential, through identifying and building on strengths, CAP administers a variety of programs and services related to financial self-sufficiency throughout the population of Madison County. Last year CAP served nearly 5,000 individuals. For more information, please call 315-684-3144.



HOW TO WRITE A PRESS RELEASE

TIP 1

THE HEADLINE - The headline of your press release should be as dramatic as possible without sounding exaggerated. Will your program affect the community in a big way? Think about what will grab the attention of a news reporter. Your headline will tell the news.

TIP 2

WRITING STYLE - The upside-down pyramid is a standard style of news writing. The broad base at the top of the pyramid represents the most newsworthy information in the story, and the narrow tip at the bottom represents the least newsworthy information in the story. This enables the story to be shortened by cutting from the bottom without losing the most important details. Similarly, when you write a press release in the upside-down pyramid format, you put the most newsworthy information at the beginning and the least newsworthy information at the end.

TIP 3

PARAGRAPH ONE - The first paragraph states the news or announcement and includes supporting information. Make sure you have addressed the who, what, when, where, and why of the story.

TIP 4

PARAGRAPH TWO - A quote often starts the second paragraph and delivers a major message point of your effort. It can state an opinion and add a human element to the story. Generally, the person writing the release will draft a quote to effectively communicate the point.

TIP 5

USE OF QUOTES - Quotes must be approved by the person to whom the quote is attributed. Quotes are often adjusted to respond to that person's concerns, tone, and style. Be sure to make the quotes conversational and brief; this increases their chances of being picked up and repeated. You should not quote more than two people. Quoting from too many sources causes confusion.

TIP 6

PARAGRAPH THREE - This paragraph contains more information on the event or announcement. You could include interesting and relevant facts that are a part of your main message. You can amplify your message with another quote either from the same spokesperson or from a different source. Be sure the quotes are conversational and brief.



TIP 7

LAST PARAGRAPH - This paragraph should tell the public what you want them to know about your organization. For example, how long it has been in the community and/or how people can contact you.

TIP 8

LOCAL OR REGIONAL MEDIA - You will be writing for local or regional media, so your press release should provide details about how the news affects your community. Your local news outlets will be more interested in a story whose impact is felt locally. That said, you should also provide some national context — like information about SNAP benefits, trends, and national studies.

TIP 9

ACRONYMS, JARGON, AND TECHNICAL LANGUAGE - Do not use acronyms, jargon or highly technical language in your press release.

TIP 10

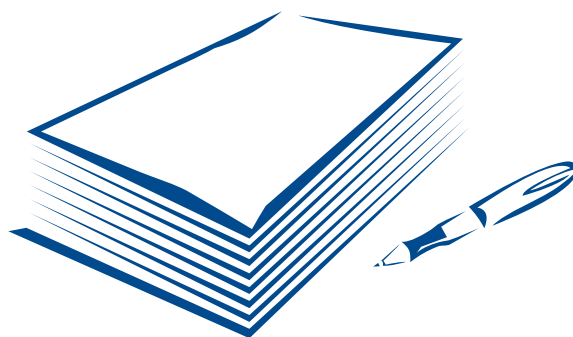
LENGTH OF PRESS RELEASE - Your press release should be to-the-point and a maximum of one to two pages. Few reporters will read beyond a second page. A press release is not the right forum to issue thank-you's and acknowledgements.

TIP 11

PROOFREAD YOUR RELEASE - Always make time to review and edit your release. Correct all spelling and typographical errors. Have someone unfamiliar with the program look over the release to see if the messages are clear to them.

TIP 12

LETTERHEAD - Print the release on your organization's letterhead so that it looks official.



PRESS RELEASE LAYOUT TIPS

1

CONTACT INFORMATION - Always include up-to-date contact information on your press release in the upper right-hand corner. The contacts you list should be easily accessible; you may wish to include more than one person. Because reporters often work on tight deadlines and may need to reach your contact immediately, consider including a cell phone number on your release.

2

PARAGRAPH ONE - The first paragraph of your press release should include the city from which you are releasing the information and the date.

3

SPACING - To ensure ease of reading, use at least a space and a half or double space between lines. Make sure you leave enough margin space, at least $\frac{3}{4}$ ", for reporters to make their own notes.

4

FORMAT - If your press release is more than a page, you should write "- more -" at the bottom of the page to indicate that it continues. You should also write "Page Two" in the upper left-hand corner of the page so that reporters can follow the release easily. Finish the release by inserting "###" at the end.



PRESS RELEASE TEMPLATE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
[DATE]

1

CONTACT:
[Your Name or appropriate contact]
[AREA CODE AND PHONE #]
[OPTIONAL: CELL #/E-MAIL]

[HUNGER ORGANIZATION] AND [CITY GROCER] KICK OFF “FILL THE CART” CAMPAIGN

*Outreach Effort Underway to Educate [YOUR COMMUNITY] Low-Income Families and Individuals
about Nutrition and SNAP Purchase Power*

2

[YOUR CITY, STATE, DATE] – [HUNGER ORGANIZATION] and [CITY GROCER] kicked off the “Fill the Cart” campaign today – a major outreach initiative to increase enrollment in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Working together, the two will educate [YOUR COMMUNITY’S] low-income families and individuals about nutritious and healthy food which can be purchased using SNAP benefits. [CITY GROCER] has also developed a recipe book highlighting sample healthy menus and an easy-to-use shopping list featuring nutritious items that can be purchased using SNAP benefits. The recipe book will be distributed at local [CITY GROCER] stores, farmers markets and health fairs.

(Add specific details about outreach effort)

“[INSERT QUOTE HERE],” said [YOUR ORGANIZATION’S] Executive Director, president or spokesperson.

3

SNAP is a win-win for the [CITY] community – for both residents and retailers. Funded with Federal dollars, each \$5 in new SNAP benefits generates almost twice that amount in economic activity for the community. For a household of four, the average benefit is about \$200 a month. Research shows that low-income households participating in SNAP have access to more food energy, protein, and an array of essential vitamins and minerals in their home food supply. *(Add other relevant information on the event of announcement – i.e. Interesting/relevant statistics, economic benefit, EBT card versus paper coupons.)*

“[INSERT SECOND QUOTE HERE],” said [SNAP office contact, partner, or another key community leader.]

[NAME OF ORGANIZATION] is community-based organization serving the [NAME OF AREA] community for 25 years. [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] raises awareness about the nutrition benefits of SNAP through outreach including prescreening events, cooking demonstrations and a toll-free information hotline. For more information about SNAP, and what you can do in [NAME OF CITY/TOWN] to help further [NAME OF ORGANIZATION]’s mission, call [PHONE NUMBER OF ORGANIZATION] or visit [YOUR Web site, if applicable].

4

###



**SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE:
VERMONT CAMPAIGN TO END CHILDHOOD HUNGER (PAGE 1)**

**Vermont Campaign to
End Childhood Hunger**



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Erik Filkorn
(802) 434-3331
filkee@gmavt.net

**VERMONT CAMPAIGN TO END CHILDHOOD HUNGER LEADING
EFFORT TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION IN FOOD STAMP PROGRAM
*Federal Research Grant Provides Funds to Launch vermontfoodhelp.com
Statewide Outreach Intensified***

Burlington, VT—September 26, 2003—The Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger (VTCECH) has joined forces with the University of Vermont and the Vermont Department of Prevention, Assistance, Transition and Health Access (PATH) to create vermontfoodhelp.com. The site is the central element in a statewide effort to reach the estimated 44,000 Vermonters who qualify for benefits under the federally funded Food Stamp Program but are not currently using it.

"There are many misconceptions about food stamps that keep people from participating in the program, and we're hoping this website and our accompanying informational campaign can help overcome them," said Robert Dostis, Executive Director of VTCECH. "Vermontfoodhelp.com is a convenient and discreet way to help Vermonters to understand how the program works, learn if they qualify, and to simplify the application process for this important nutrition program."

The program is being funded by a U.S. Department of Agriculture Technology Research Grant awarded in September, 2002. The Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger has created a coalition of public and private resources to develop the website, informational materials for use in hundreds of locations statewide, and a public information campaign that will run for a year. The website was designed and built by Bluehouse Group of Richmond in cooperation with UVM. PATH will be tracking whether new applicants have visited the website, and

MORE

180 Flynn Avenue • Burlington, VT 05401 • Phone: 802-865-0255 • Fax: 802-865-0266 • www.vtnohunger.org



**SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE:
VERMONT CAMPAIGN TO END CHILDHOOD HUNGER (PAGE 2)**

(continued)

vermontfoodhelp.com

9/26/03

Page Two

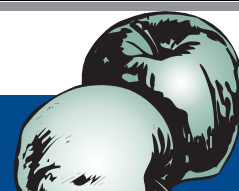
will provide feedback to UVM on its effectiveness in educating potential program users.

"The Food Stamp Program is our primary resource for combating hunger in Vermont, and with this new website, people can learn about the program and its eligibility requirements in privacy," said Eileen Elliott, Deputy Secretary of Agency of Human Services. "Partner agencies and service organizations will be able to use the website as a guide in consultations with clients, helping them understand what their benefits might be, and what they can be used for. Vermontfoodhelp.com is going to help us qualify many more food stamp recipients."

The statewide campaign includes an effort to publicize the over 500 public-use computers around Vermont. "We hope that our outreach will help overcome the 'digital divide' and encourage low-income households to take advantage of the benefits of the Internet," said Brad Blackwell, coordinator of the vermontfoodhelp.com program. The site is intended to be easy to use and is confidential.

"While our primary goal is to increase participation in the program, the research component is equally important," said UVM Extension Nutrition Specialist Linda Berlin. "Through this website we can gain valuable knowledge about the barriers that prevent people from taking advantage of the Food Stamp Program. What we learn from this project will serve as a model as other states advance."

###



SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE: HUMAN SERVICES COALITION

For Immediate Release

CONTACT: Daniella Levine, Executive Director
Human Services Coalition
305-576-5001 Ext.19
305-467-4015 (cellular)

FOOD FOR ALL: A Building Block for Community Prosperity
Community Leaders Convene to Address Growing Problem of Hunger

Miami, FL – July 28, 2003 - On July 30, 2003 at 4:00 p.m. and July 31, 2003 at 9:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m., local and national advocates will meet to discuss the growing dilemma of hunger in Miami-Dade and the country. The **Food For All** Summit will take place at Temple Israel, located at 137 NE 19th Street, Miami, FL.

The Summit is designed to bring awareness and attention to the South Florida community concerning the issues of hunger, poverty and health related concerns. Daniella Levine, Executive Director of Human Services Coalition of Dade County, a coalition member, observes, “Far too many people in the United States and Miami-Dade are going hungry or living on the edge of hunger. Improvements to and effective use of Federal nutrition safety net programs and enhanced coordination and innovations at the local level can address this situation and help ensure that no one in the community is forced to go hungry.”

Food for All has been generated through the efforts of a coalition of community groups, including the Allegany Franciscan Foundation, Alliance for Human Services, and Human Services Coalition (HSC). Participants include Miami-Dade Commissioner Jimmy Morales, New York City Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum, Roberto Salazar, head of the Federal Food and Nutrition Service in the Bush administration, Ellen Vollinger from the Food Research Action Center and Modesto Abety of the Children’s Trust. Virgil Conrad, Regional Director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, will present a signed proclamation to end hunger (Wednesday, 5 p.m.). This event will draw attention to the grave hunger crisis facing Miami-Dade County and the State of Florida.

Over a Fellowship dinner, the advocates will hear from those directly affected by hunger and helped by existing programs. After an evening of presentations to learn about the issues, the attendees will spend Thursday in smaller groups developing solutions to the problem.

The goal is to draw from Federal, State and local resources to end hunger in South Florida. According to Daniella Levine, “The community is coming together to develop a strong action agenda – together we can make Miami #1 in community prosperity instead of #1 in poverty!”

Founded in 1996, the Human Services Coalition of Dade County (HSC) works to empower individuals and communities to create a more just society by promoting civic engagement, economic fairness and access to health and human services. At the heart of these efforts is a belief that individuals, families and communities will be strengthened through increased public awareness and civic involvement in improving systems of care. HSC is a membership-based coalition composed of over 6,000 members, representing community groups, faith-based organizations, policy makers, businesses and individuals. For more information, please contact us at 305-576-5001 or visit www.hscdade.org.



WHAT IS A PROCLAMATION?

Who issues a proclamation?

Proclamations are usually issued by mayors, county commissions, governors, city commissions, State legislatures, and other public officials to recognize a local cause or achievement.

Why and when should an organization request a proclamation?

Organizations can use a proclamation to get more publicity when conducting events or outreach efforts. The timing is best around a major event or when undergoing a big media push.

How is a proclamation issued?

Your organization may submit a proclamation request. You may privately approach a mayor, State legislator, or city commissioner to sponsor your request. Provide draft language that you would like the issuing body to consider. That often helps to move the process forward. If the proclamation is to be issued at a public gathering, such as a city commission meeting, you may need to file the request a month or more in advance, depending on the rules of the issuing body.

What steps should be taken to issue a proclamation?

Once you have determined which public official(s) you would like to ask to issue a proclamation, it will be important to research whether any guidelines exist. This information can often be found on the officials' Web site, or can be obtained by calling a public affairs liaison. In many cases, you can apply for a proclamation by mail, e-mail, or personal delivery.

What does a typical proclamation say?

The language in the proclamation should be crafted to drive home key points about your organization, your special outreach effort, and the value of SNAP. The proclamation template on page F 18 can provide some helpful language.

What does a typical proclamation look like?

Oftentimes, a proclamation is printed on heavy-weight paper and affixed with a seal and official signatures. Your organization can proudly display it.



PROCLAMATION TEMPLATE

SNAP AWARENESS DAY/WEEK/MONTH

[TIMING TO BE PROCLAIMED]

By the [INSERT TITLE OF LOCAL OR STATE OFFICIAL...Such as Mayor of/Governor] of
[INSERT CITY/TOWN/STATE]

A PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the cornerstone of the Federal nutrition assistance safety net, providing more than 8.2 million households and 21 million low-income Americans with nutrition assistance;

WHEREAS, hunger is a problem that affects families and individuals, including children and the elderly;

WHEREAS almost half of those eligible for SNAP benefits are currently not receiving the benefits they need, and [INSERT STATE/LOCAL STATISTIC, IF POSSIBLE];

WHEREAS, each \$5 in new SNAP benefits generates nearly double that in economic activity;

WHEREAS, SNAP is modern, with benefits now delivered via electronic (EBT) cards;

WHEREAS, food retailers who accept SNAP EBT cards are important partners fighting hunger in our community;

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Agriculture and the State of [INSERT NAME OF STATE] are working to simplify the SNAP application process;

WHEREAS, the STATE/CITY/TOWN of [INSERT NAME] is participating in SNAP's national outreach effort by conducting an awareness effort to help constituents determine potential eligibility and inform them on how to apply;

NOW, THEREFORE, I (INSERT OFFICIAL'S NAME AND TITLE) do hereby proclaim (TIMING – DAY, WEEK, MONTH) (SPECIFIC DATE) as “SNAP Awareness Day/Week/Month” and call upon the community and partner organizations to celebrate with appropriate ceremonies to acknowledge these efforts.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand on this [INSERT DAY AND MONTH, YEAR]

Signature of Official



**SAMPLE PROCLAMATION:
FRESNO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS (PAGE 1)**

Fresno County Board of Supervisors
December 14, 2004

WHEREAS, the County of Fresno is committed to promoting healthy eating, good nutrition, and active lifestyles; and

WHEREAS, in November 2002, the California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) revealed that more than 2.24 million low-income adults in California cannot always afford to put food on the table and, as a result, almost one out of three of these adults (658,000) experience episodes of hunger; and

WHEREAS, the ranks of food-insecure Californians include not just the most impoverished but: working adults, the elderly with fixed incomes and many families; and

WHEREAS, food insecurity and poor nutrition pose substantial risks to health resulting in large costs to society through increased needs for medical care relating to obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, etc., and impede education and work productivity; and

WHEREAS, nutrition education and access to quality food improve health, education, and employment outcomes; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Census Bureau's 2003 American Community Survey indicates that Fresno County has the seventh-highest poverty rate of all counties in the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Food Stamp Program was first established as the Food Stamp Plan in 1939 to help needy families and a lagging economy during the depression era and was revised in 1961 with additional changes made in 1977; and

WHEREAS, the Food Stamp Program is the first line of defense against food insecurity and malnutrition; and

WHEREAS, fifty-one percent of all Food Stamp Program recipients are children and nine percent of recipients are age 60 or older; and

WHEREAS, the Food Stamp Program supports local farmers and Federal benefit dollars could potentially contribute an additional \$88 million to Fresno County's economy, with an economic multiplier effect of 1.84, resulting in an economic gain of \$161.9 million annually; and



**SAMPLE PROCLAMATION:
FRESNO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS (PAGE 2)**

WHEREAS, Fresno County's Department of Employment and Temporary Assistance has successfully improved business practices that resulted in a significant increase in the Food Stamp Program Accuracy rate from 85% in Federal Fiscal Year 2000 to 96% in 2003; and

WHEREAS, California's food stamp participation rate is the lowest in the Nation, but Fresno County is actively addressing access to food stamps in the County and has increased outreach activities that resulted in an 80% increase in the nonassistance Food Stamp Program participation from Fiscal Year 1999-00 to 2003-04; and

WHEREAS, Community Food Bank is undertaking a partnership with Fresno County, the Congressional Hunger Center, Fresno Metro Ministry, Foodlink for Tulare County, the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Western Region Office and other County businesses and organizations to continue to increase County residents' access to the Food Stamp Program through widespread outreach efforts and cooperation with Community Based Organizations.

Now, THEREFORE, as the Food Stamp Program contributes to the current and future health and well-being of the people of Fresno County, Be It Resolved, that we the members of the Board of Supervisors do hereby proclaim the year leading to the 2005 holiday season as Food and Nutrition Access Year in Fresno County. We call upon the communities of Fresno County to work with State and Federal agencies to improve access to the Food Stamp Program to strengthen this region's people and economy and to improve the health of our county.

ADOPTED by the Fresno County Board of Supervisors this 14th day of December 2004.

Susan B. Anderson, Chairman

Phil Larson

Judith Case

Henry Perea

Bob Waterston



THE COMMUNITY VOICE: THE EDITORIAL SECTION

What is the editorial section?

The editorial section is the section of the paper in which the editors of the paper and others express their opinions on important issues facing the community. This section of the newspaper is typically well read by key community leaders and decision makers who can help ensure the success of your efforts. Below are several tips for getting your messages and information on these pages. Keep in mind that the more you can tie your outreach efforts in to local happenings, the greater the likelihood of getting published.

What is a letter to the editor?

Letters to the editor are written by readers in response to an article that appeared within the past few days and submitted for publication in the newspaper. Keep on top of local news coverage around hunger, poverty, or families in need. This type of news coverage provides an opportunity for you to respond with helpful information.

What if no one contacts me about my letter to the editor?

If you have sent your letter to the editor and have not heard anything within a week, make a follow up call to check on its status. Be aware that editors receive hundreds of letters and may not immediately respond. A letter to the editor on a specific topic has a better chance of being published if more than one person or group responds. This is a good time to rally your partners and ask them to write to the paper as well; each letter, however, should be individually drafted. Form letters are usually ignored.

What is an opinion-editorial (op-ed)?

An op-ed is an article written by someone expressing their opinion about an important issue. Op-eds are submitted by community members. Editors decide which to print in the paper. Op-eds are an excellent forum to let people know about the benefits of SNAP because they allow you to share your point of view with much greater detail and persuasion than a short letter will permit.

What if no one contacts me about my op-ed?

Due to limited space, not every op-ed that is submitted can be printed. Most op-ed editors will respond to your submission within a week or two. If you have not heard back in that time frame, or if your piece is particularly time-sensitive, it is perfectly acceptable to call and ask about its status.

TIPS TO WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

- Check out the newspaper's guidelines for publishing letters to the editor, usually printed on the editorial page itself.
- Begin by referring to the article to which you're responding, including its title and the date it appeared in print.
- Resist the urge to say everything you know. Keep your letter concise and make one clear point. Refer to the talking points at the end of this section for useful language.



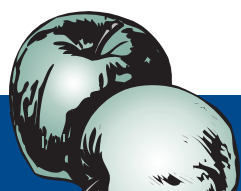
TIPS TO GET AN OP-ED PUBLISHED ON THE VALUE OF SNAP

- **Learn the rules.** Research the newspapers' specific rules about submissions, such as word count, before you start writing. This information may be posted on the outlet's Web site.
- **Make contact.** Call the editorial page editors of the newspapers and talk to them about your column idea. They may have ideas about the direction you are taking that will increase the likelihood of being published.
- **Use a hook.** Include a "hook" or catchy aspect in your piece. Has there recently been a news story about hunger that would make an op-ed on SNAP timely? Perhaps there is new data on local poverty rates, or a special event coming up that will provide a hook.
- **Use examples.** Capture the reader's interest with illustrations, anecdotes, and personal stories. These persuasive tools help explain complicated issues and bring the human element to your op-ed.
- **Stick to facts and solid arguments.** Avoid alienating readers with inflammatory or accusatory remarks.
- **Make a specific recommendation.** State your opinion on the issue.
- **Make a unique point.** Offer a new point of view even if the newspaper itself editorialized recently about hunger or poverty.
- **End with a bang.** Summarize your argument and leave readers with information, advice, or an idea they or the community can act on, such as a challenge to increase enrollment of their neighbors and family members who are eligible.

What is an editorial board meeting?

Most newspapers have editorial boards who determine the position that the newspaper will take in its printed editorials. These representatives from the newspaper meet regularly to consider those positions. Meeting with this board as a group or with individual board members allows you to influence editorial coverage of hunger and SNAP issues. As a result of an editorial board meeting, a reporter may be assigned to cover the issue, or an editorial may appear in the paper.

Also consider joining an advisory board, county board, or nutrition board, if one exists in your community. Look to this group of individuals to present hunger and other related topics to the editorial board. There is a chance there will be no immediate outcome, but the meeting will introduce you and your partners to influential individuals at the paper, and position you as a knowledgeable source about SNAP. These are important relationships to cultivate, so follow up with new information from time to time.



POINTERS TO SET UP AN EDITORIAL BOARD MEETING WITH A NEWSPAPER



- **Plan your timing.** You'll grab a few minutes of a board member's precious time in the same way that you'll get the attention of a beat reporter: a strong peg to a current news story.



- **Make an appointment.** Call the newspaper and ask who organizes editorial board meetings. In most instances, an assistant will either connect you directly to a board member or ask you to send a letter or e-mail outlining your request. Most papers reserve regular hours for the board to meet, generally between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. The meetings are usually held in a small conference room at the newspaper's offices.



- **Assemble a team.** Rally your partners. Assemble a diverse group to meet with the editorial board, with each person having different perspectives and experiences related to food stamps and hunger. Participants might include the head of a local food bank, a local grocer, and an elected official. Let the newspaper know ahead of time whom you are bringing.



- **Rehearse your presentation.** Designate one person to act as the spokesperson and introduce the issue (e.g., "Many people go hungry unnecessarily and aren't receiving the SNAP benefits they need. When people use SNAP benefits, everyone in the community benefits."). Limit your remarks to 15 or 20 minutes.



- **Leave written information behind.** After the presentation, the members of the editorial board generally ask questions (see the Q&A at the end of this section for helpful hints). Be sure to leave written information about your organization, hunger, how SNAP benefits can help and their positive impact on your community, etc.



SAMPLE OP-ED: URBAN JUSTICE

ANOTHER VOICE

Stamp Out Myths About Food Stamps

Program costs city nothing, helps in several ways

By Shelly Reed

It is a common myth that Food Stamps drain money from the economy. In fact, they do just the opposite. When people use Food Stamps in your neighborhood they are providing business for grocery stores, bodegas and markets, and they are fueling the economy and creating jobs.

So where is the money coming from? Food Stamps are funded by the federal government, not by local or state budgets. The money is out there, and if you don't use it in your community, then people in some other community will.

A recent report from the New York City Council, looking at the USDA 2004 "Funding Overview," estimated that the city could receive as much as \$900 million in additional federal funds if all eligible New Yorkers applied for Food Stamp benefits. And according to the Nutrition Consortium of New York State, the city could be losing more than \$1 billion in revenue per year due to program underutilization. It estimates that for every Food Stamp dollar used, \$1.84 is generated in economic activity.

As of last September, only 54.5 percent of

eligible individuals were receiving Food Stamps, and since 1995 Food Stamp participation by the eligible population went down 36.6 percent.

Also, Food Stamps, by providing a needed economic boost for individuals in danger of losing their homes, can prevent new cases of homelessness.

East Side State Sen. Liz Krueger says, "Food Stamps is a win-win for low-income New Yorkers, our retail sector, and the public at large, by decreasing hunger and increasing food sales." She further asserts that "the Federal Food Stamp program brings hundreds of millions of dollars into New York City's economy by providing money for food for low-income New Yorkers, who immediately spend the funds at local stores, creating jobs and generating revenue in the local economy."

According to the West Side Campaign Against Hunger, at the Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew, located on West 86th Street and West End Avenue, only 37 percent of 9,000-plus households that came in for emergency food were receiving Food Stamps. That was during a time when the pantry saw both increased demand and decreased supplies of

food.

Food Stamps are an underutilized resource for many reasons. Some people are embarrassed to apply, but food stamps are not a handout, they are an entitlement, and with the new food card, which works like a debit card, there are no longer embarrassing coupons to rip out while in line for groceries.

Statistics provided by the city's Human Resource Administration reflect that more than half of Food Stamp recipients in New York City do not receive public assistance or income from Social Security. They are the working poor. And there are a great number of these working poor, elderly and disabled individuals living on the Upper East Side and Upper West Side who are unaware that they may be eligible for Food Stamps.

By letting go of any negative perceptions of Food Stamps, we can encourage these individuals to apply. In doing so, we can improve both our local economy and the lives of potential Food Stamp recipients.

You can now apply online, at <http://www.otda.state.ny.us>.

Shelly Reed works with the nonprofit Urban Justice Center in the Homelessness Outreach and Prevention Project.



PURPOSE OF COMMUNITY CALENDAR LISTINGS

Newspapers, radio and TV stations, and local access/community cable TV channels often have time or space set aside for a calendar listing of public events happening in and around a city or State. This publicity is free and easy to obtain.

Most media outlets that have a calendar section assign a specific staff member — usually a calendar editor — to receive submissions and compile the listings.

Respect the media outlet's deadlines. A general rule of thumb is to submit listing information a few weeks in advance; however, it is best to contact the specific outlet to determine timing and preferences (fax, e-mail, U.S. mail) for receiving calendar information. This is also a perfect opportunity to inquire whether or not the outlet accepts corresponding images and, if so, what the preferred format is (hard copy, JPEG, TIF) and the resolution or image size needed.

If you are submitting a calendar listing by U.S. mail, it is recommended that you send a cover letter and listing two to three weeks before the event date. Remember to put your letter on your organization's letterhead; if you are submitting an image along with your letter, be sure to include a sample caption.

A CALENDAR LISTING SHOULD CONTAIN:

- **Who**
- **What**
- **Where**
- **When**
- **Contact name
and phone number**
- **Cost, if any**



COMMUNITY CALENDAR LISTING TEMPLATE

[DATE]

Dear Community Calendar Editor,

Too many low-income individuals and families in [NAME OF STATE/CITY/TOWN] are not getting the food they need. In fact, [X NUMBER] low-income people in our community are at risk for hunger and poor nutrition, and many of these are children. Studies indicate that, nationally, about 50 percent of those eligible for SNAP benefits are not getting the benefits they need. Here in [NAME OF STATE/CITY/TOWN], [INSERT STATE/LOCAL STATISTIC, IF POSSIBLE].

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the cornerstone of the Federal nutrition assistance safety net. Today, the program provides more than 8.2 million households and 21 million low-income Americans with nutrition assistance.

To increase enrollment at the [STATE/LOCAL] level, [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] has embarked on a major outreach effort to help low-income individuals and families learn about their eligibility for SNAP benefits and how to apply. On [DATE AND TIME], [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] will be [EVENT INFORMATION DETAILS] at [LOCATION].

Please include the following notice in your community calendar listing. If you have any questions about our program, please contact me at [PHONE NUMBER].

Thank you.

[CONTACT NAME]
[NAME OF ORGANIZATION]



SAMPLE COMMUNITY CALENDAR LISTING: FARMER'S MARKET GENERIC

SNAP Prescreening at Farmer's Market

Millions of low-income people are eligible to receive SNAP benefits, but only about half are enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Community Partnership will be conducting SNAP eligibility prescreening at the Farmer's Market on Wednesday, September 23, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., to help interested persons determine whether they qualify for SNAP. Stop by to learn more about the program. A few minutes of your time can help put healthy and nutritious food on your table. For more information, please call (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

SAMPLE COMMUNITY CALENDAR LISTING: PROJECT BREAD



Food assistance for seniors

Are you struggling to put food on the table? Elderly and disabled people are able to apply for SNAP benefits by mail. And recent changes have increased the benefit level for many Social Security recipients.

Call Project Bread's FoodSource Hotline at 800-645-8333, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., to see if you are eligible for SNAP benefits or find out about other food resources in the community. Bilingual staff are available. Or visit www.getting-foodstamps.org.



ANOTHER **BERRY**
GOOD IDEA
FOR OUTREACH



RADIO PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS (PSAS)

What is a public service announcement?

Public Service Announcements, or PSAs, are public service messages that broadcasters air free of charge as part of their community service programs. Media outlets are required to donate airtime for PSAs.

Does SNAP have PSAs that my organization can use?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program has a number of radio PSAs available for you to provide to local media outlets. All of the PSAs use messages that relate to target audiences. Like the national paid advertising, these messages also encourage people who are eligible for SNAP benefits to apply.

Where can I find PSAs?

Included in this toolkit is a disc of PSAs that you can share with local radio stations. You can also listen to them, and stations can download them, at www.fns.usda.gov/cga/Radio/radio.htm. Feel free to customize these PSAs with your own toll-free number and local message. At the end of this section, you will also find scripts of these same PSAs that you can produce and adapt locally.

Can FNS' paid radio ads used be used as PSAs?

No. The FNS ads were negotiated exclusively for commercial use, not for PSA distribution.

What are my chances of placing PSAs?

Because radio stations can accommodate only a limited number of these “free” advertising spots, and because there are many groups that want to increase awareness of their causes, pitching and placing PSAs can be challenging work. However, because SNAP offers such a tangible benefit to the community, the chances are good that the PSAs will be used. Ask the reporter for a contact at the station who is responsible for PSA placement.

How do I pitch a PSA?

As with a news story, the best way to pitch PSAs is to call or send a letter to the PSA director at the radio station, present the local problem or situation, and show how you are providing a solution. EXAMPLE: “There are 100,000 hungry men, women, and children in Anytown. Many of these people may be eligible for SNAP benefits, but don’t know it. SNAP benefits can help them put good, healthy food on the table. At the same time, the local economy benefits from SNAP purchases.”

WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO PITCH PSAs?

PSAs can be used at any time of year, but your pitch to radio stations will be more effective if you can find a “hook” to encourage them to run the announcements. This could include:

END OF SCHOOL

In communities that don’t participate in the Summer Food Service Program, many children who receive at least one full, healthy meal a day during the school year lose that safety net in summer, when school is out.

HOLIDAY SEASON

People are acutely aware of hunger and nutrition issues around the holidays.

DURING NATIONAL OR LOCAL “AWARENESS” WEEKS OR MONTHS

Some awareness weeks may make audiences more receptive to SNAP information — for example, National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week (which is the week before Thanksgiving) and National Nutrition Month (March).

WHEN PAID ADVERTISEMENTS ARE RUNNING

Paid advertisements from the national media campaign may be running in your area (you can find out by visiting www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach). If paid advertisements are airing locally, use that information to leverage your PSA request.



10 STEPS IN PLACING PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

The steps in placing PSAs are similar to pitching regular stories to your local media.

STEP 1 | Compile Media List

Compile a media list of stations that are likely to have audiences who may be eligible for SNAP benefits and that are also likely to run PSAs. Gather contact information and add it to your list. Many stations have PSA directors who are responsible for determining which PSAs the station will air and when. (See the Media Outreach section of this toolkit for more information about media lists.)

STEP 2 | Background Information

Before pitching your PSAs to a local radio station, learn more about the radio station, its programming (country, news, etc.), and its audience. Check out the station's Web site. The more informed you sound about the importance of SNAP messages to the station's audience, the more effective you will be. (See the Media Outreach section of this toolkit for more information about researching news outlets.)

STEP 3 | Make Introductory Calls

Make introductory pitch calls before sending your PSAs to the radio stations. Use these initial calls to double-check your contact information and build a rapport with public service and community affairs professionals. Ask for information about PSA submission requirements, such as format or length.

STEP 4 | Make the Pitch

A sample pitch script is provided in this toolkit. The script provides an outline of the key points you need to cover during a phone conversation or voicemail message with the community or public affairs contact. Use the script as a reference to make sure you cover all of the important points. Practice your pitch aloud at least once before calling. Do not read directly from the script as you talk. Downloadable radio PSAs are available on the FNS Web site (www.fns.usda.gov/cga/Radio/radio.htm).

STEP 5 | Deliver PSAs to Stations

Consider personally delivering your PSAs and a cover letter to the stations on your list. If you have not yet established a relationship, mail your materials. Follow up about a week later.

STEP 6 | Make Follow up Calls

If needed, continue placing follow up calls for several weeks to find out if your announcement will run.

STEP 7 | Provide Additional Information

Once you begin pitching your PSAs, some radio stations may request more information about SNAP benefits or your work to reduce hunger. The Media Outreach section of this toolkit contains media and messaging materials to help prepare your spokesperson.

STEP 8 | Measure Success

Ask your contacts at the radio stations if they can provide you with specific information on when and how many times your PSA was aired. Track the success of your effort by identifying any increase in the number of calls to your toll-free number during the period when the PSAs ran.

STEP 9 | Present Findings

Compile your evaluation findings into a memo or presentation to share with your organization.

STEP 10 | Take It to the Next Level

Based on the success of your PSA campaign, you may want to consider a formal partnership with the station, perhaps along with a commercial underwriter such as a grocery store. For more information about partnerships, see the Partnership section of this toolkit.



PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT PITCH SCRIPT TEMPLATE

(Note: This sample script targets stations with elderly audiences.)

“Hello, my name is XX and I am calling from [YOUR ORGANIZATION]. Is this a good time? (If not, ask when you can call them back.) You may not be aware that XX elderly people in [NAME OF STATE/CITY] are having trouble putting food on the table, and are not taking advantage of help that they qualify for.

“[YOUR ORGANIZATION] is hoping you will help us address this situation by broadcasting PSAs about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). By spreading the message about SNAP benefits, older members of our community will learn more about the program and how to enroll.

“Is this something you think you or your station would be interested in using? I’d be happy to send you some sample PSAs. Please feel free to contact me at XX if you have any questions about SNAP or the PSAs. Again, my name is XX and my number is XX.”



RADIO PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT TEMPLATE

COVER LETTER FOR A LOCAL EVENT

To: Public Affairs Director
From: [NAME & ORGANIZATION]
RE: [CITY/STATE] SNAP Outreach Effort (You can add additional information like
"To Help Elderly Access Benefits")
DATE: [DATE]

Only about half of those eligible to receive SNAP benefits are currently enrolled. In [STATE/CITY/TOWN], low-income seniors are feeling the pinch due to bills and other expenses, and are not getting the proper nutrition. By defraying the cost of groceries, SNAP allows recipients to use their limited incomes on other important basic needs like housing, medical costs, transportation, and utilities.

[YOUR ORGANIZATION] is kicking off a "Benefit Bus" tour on [DATE] to help seniors in [STATE/CITY/TOWN] access SNAP benefits without the challenge of finding transportation to a local SNAP office. This bus tour will span X days and X locations from [TIME]. SNAP outreach coordinators will be on hand to prescreen seniors and provide a checklist of necessary paperwork.

Below are scripts for PSAs notifying your listeners about upcoming enrollment activities. We would appreciate it if your station would read these announcements as often as possible before the event kicks off on [DATE] and throughout the [TIME FRAME OF EVENT]. Thank you in advance for helping connect seniors in [STATE/CITY/TOWN] to the nutrition assistance they need.

RADIO (15 seconds)

SNAP helps you buy the groceries you need. You may qualify and not know it. [YOUR ORGANIZATION]'s "Benefit Bus" tour will stop at assisted living locations in [NAME OF CITY/TOWN] from [DATE] to [DATE]. Find out more by calling XXX-XXX-XXXX.

RADIO (30 seconds)

With bills and doctor visits, expenses can add up quickly. Sometimes, that makes it hard to put good food on the table. SNAP helps you buy the groceries you need. You may qualify and not know it. Eligibility for SNAP benefits is based on income and other expenses. For most seniors, the benefit is enough to make a real difference.

[YOUR ORGANIZATION]'s "Benefit Bus" tour will stop at assisted living locations in [NAME OF CITY/TOWN] from [DATE] to [DATE]. Find out more by calling XXX-XXX-XXXX.



RADIO PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT TEMPLATE

COVER LETTER USING USDA-PRODUCED PSAs

To: Public Affairs Director
From: [NAME & ORGANIZATION]
RE: SNAP Outreach Effort
DATE: [DATE]

Have you ever had to choose between paying the heating bill or having enough food for dinner? Have you been faced with the impossible choice of buying medicine for your sick child or food for the family table? Every day, thousands of people in [NAME OF STATE/TOWN/CITY] grapple with issues like these. But they don't have to.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps low-income people purchase nutritious, healthy food. However, only half of those eligible to receive SNAP benefits are currently enrolled.

At [YOUR ORGANIZATION], we are working hard to raise awareness about SNAP benefits in our community. Many people have a difficult time making ends meet. By helping out with the grocery bill, SNAP benefits allow recipients to use their limited income on other important basic needs like housing, medical costs, transportation, and utilities. We are interested in working with your station to inform listeners about SNAP and how to enroll.

In addition to PSA scripts and readers, taped PSAs are available. We can send you these fully produced spots via e-mail or on a CD. We would appreciate it if your station could roll these announcements into your programming and air them as often as possible. *(Mention how you will follow up with the station and how they can contact you.)*

Thank you in advance for helping our community "eat right when money's tight."



**SAMPLE PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT
COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM OF MADISON COUNTY INC.**



*Helping People
Help Themselves*

3 East Main Street
P.O. Box 249
Morrisville, NY
13408
315-684-3144
800-721-2271
Fax: 315-684-9650

112 Center Street
P.O. Box 384
Canastota, NY
13032
315-697-3588
800-280-4717
Fax: 315-697-3690

6 Cambridge Avenue
P.O. Box 249
Morrisville, NY
13408
315-684-7862
866-684-7862
Fax: 315-684-9940

Working Solutions
1286 Upper Lenox
Ave.
Oneida, NY 13421
Located in the
Wal-Mart Plaza

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 384
Canastota, NY
13032
(315) 363-2400

Community Action Program for Madison County, Inc.

www.capmadco.org

LIVE ANNOUNCER READ COPY AND INSTRUCTIONS

ANNOUNCER: Food Stamps Make America Stronger

Community Action Program for Madison County, Inc., and Madison County Department of Social Services, announce the launch of the County's Food Stamp application website - **www.MadisonCountyFoodStamps.org**

www.MadisonCountyFoodStamps.org allows MADISON COUNTY RESIDENTS to find out if they are eligible for Food Stamps and to submit a Food Stamp application online.

If you or someone you know would like more information about Food Stamps, log on to **www.MadisonCountyFoodStamps.org** or call Toll-free 1 – 866 – 684 – 7862

COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM FOR MADISON COUNTY

HELPING PEOPLE HELP THEMSELVES



PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT READERS

What are “readers”?

“Readers” are brief announcements promoting SNAP. Readers are given to radio stations so that their on-air talent can read them live whenever time permits.

SAMPLE READERS	
:10 SECONDS	
	<p>SAMPLE 1</p> <p>The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program helps low-income people eat right when money’s tight. Call 1-800-221-5689 today. (6.5)</p> <p>A message from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. (3.5)</p> <p>SAMPLE 2</p> <p>The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program can help you or someone you know to eat right when money’s tight. Call 1-800-221-5689 today. (6.5)</p> <p>A message from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. (3.5)</p>
:15 SECONDS	
	<p>SAMPLE 1</p> <p>The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program can help stretch your budget at the grocery store. It’ll help you eat right when money’s tight. Call 1-800-221-5689 today. (11.5)</p> <p>A message from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. (3.5)</p> <p>SAMPLE 2</p> <p>Keeping up with the fast pace of life takes eating right, especially when money’s tight. If you have low income, consider the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Call 1-800-221-5689 today. (11.5) A message from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. (3.5)</p> <p>SAMPLE 3</p> <p>Attention low-income seniors — the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program can help you eat right when money’s tight. Call 1-800-221-5689 for more information. (11.5)</p> <p>A message from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. (3.5)</p>
Format for readers should include time for message and tagline.	



PLANT THE SEEDS
REAP THE
BENEFITS



PROMISING PRACTICES

What is a promising practice?

“Promising practices” are everywhere. New ideas or refinements of existing ideas are continuously being implemented by State and local programs to educate and help individuals access their programs. Promising practices may involve big or little changes to existing projects to improve service delivery. They may or may not have evidence of positive results from evaluations; in fact, they might just have a general intuitive appeal rather than a proven effect. Promising practices sometimes prompt completely different ideas. Sometimes, promising practices are those “A-ha!” moments — something that makes sense but you did not think significant right away. Unfortunately, practical knowledge in one community that could lead to significant improvements in another often goes unshared.

Who is compiling our promising practices?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is compiling promising practices to assist States, local agencies, community and faith-based organizations, and others to share their best ideas.

Why is SNAP sharing the practices?

SNAP’s collection of promising practices is an effort to find and share outreach or customer service models that can help increase participation in SNAP. Through this collection of promising practices, timely information on program and policy innovations is disseminated so that all stakeholders may benefit from the experiences of their peers across the country. The sharing of ideas can stimulate program changes, spark creative exchanges, and serve as a launching pad for the next generation of program innovations. It can inspire a dynamic examination of ways to improve service delivery systems for people eligible for, applying for, and participating in SNAP.

Whom can I contact for more information?

The project’s name and a contact person are listed by each promising practice. SNAP has developed an informal process of collecting promising practices. We encourage you to get in touch with the listed contact people for more details. The Web site is updated continually so check back often.

PROMISING PRACTICES ARE ONLINE

Go to: www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach and click on “Promising Practices.”

? ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A NEW IDEA?

On the Web site, you will find information that you can use in your own project. You can learn about promising practices from around the country as well as from other programs.

? WHO CAN USE THE WEB SITE?

The Web site is for State and local SNAP agencies as well as Federal/State program staff, volunteers, community members, policymakers, funders, researchers, or anyone else who wants to develop a project or improve the quality of their existing programs.



How can I share my promising practice?

Submit your practice to us through the FNS Web site. Tell us about something new you did or how you put an innovative twist on an existing idea. Go ahead and brag about the response you received — from your co-workers, managers, or your customers. This is an opportunity to shine while you give others ideas to improve or develop their projects. Worried that your idea may not be new? Not to worry; something that is “old hat” to some may be a complete revelation to others.

SOME EXAMPLES OF PROMISING PRACTICES

MEDIA OUTREACH

Vermont – Partnering with Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger and Vermont Grocer’s Association, the State SNAP agency held a press conference at a supermarket to announce changes in SNAP that make it easier to apply.

DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS

California – In partnership with the local food bank, Alameda County Social Services facilitated periodic SNAP outreach trainings for organizations interested in helping their own clients apply for SNAP benefits. Participants received a training manual complete with tools and resources to help them get started in their own SNAP outreach efforts.

California – Alameda County Food Bank provided on-site “Food Stamp Enrollment Clinics” for clients of other community-based organizations. Bilingual staff from the food bank prescreened clients for potential eligibility and assisted them in completing the application.

Connecticut – The State agency sent mailings to soup kitchens, food pantries, and shelters to ask them to make SNAP applications and information available to their customers.

New York – The Korean Grocers Association in New York City published SNAP information in Korean.

Pennsylvania – Pathmark grocery stores in underserved areas of Philadelphia hosted eligibility prescreening events.

Virginia – Americorps volunteers in rural counties of the State went door to door to provide information on SNAP. They talked to people about SNAP benefits while grocery shopping, hosted outreach gatherings, prescreened for potential eligibility, and helped complete application forms.

USING PSAs

California – The Food Bank of Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties aired television ads to market the nutrition and health benefits of SNAP.

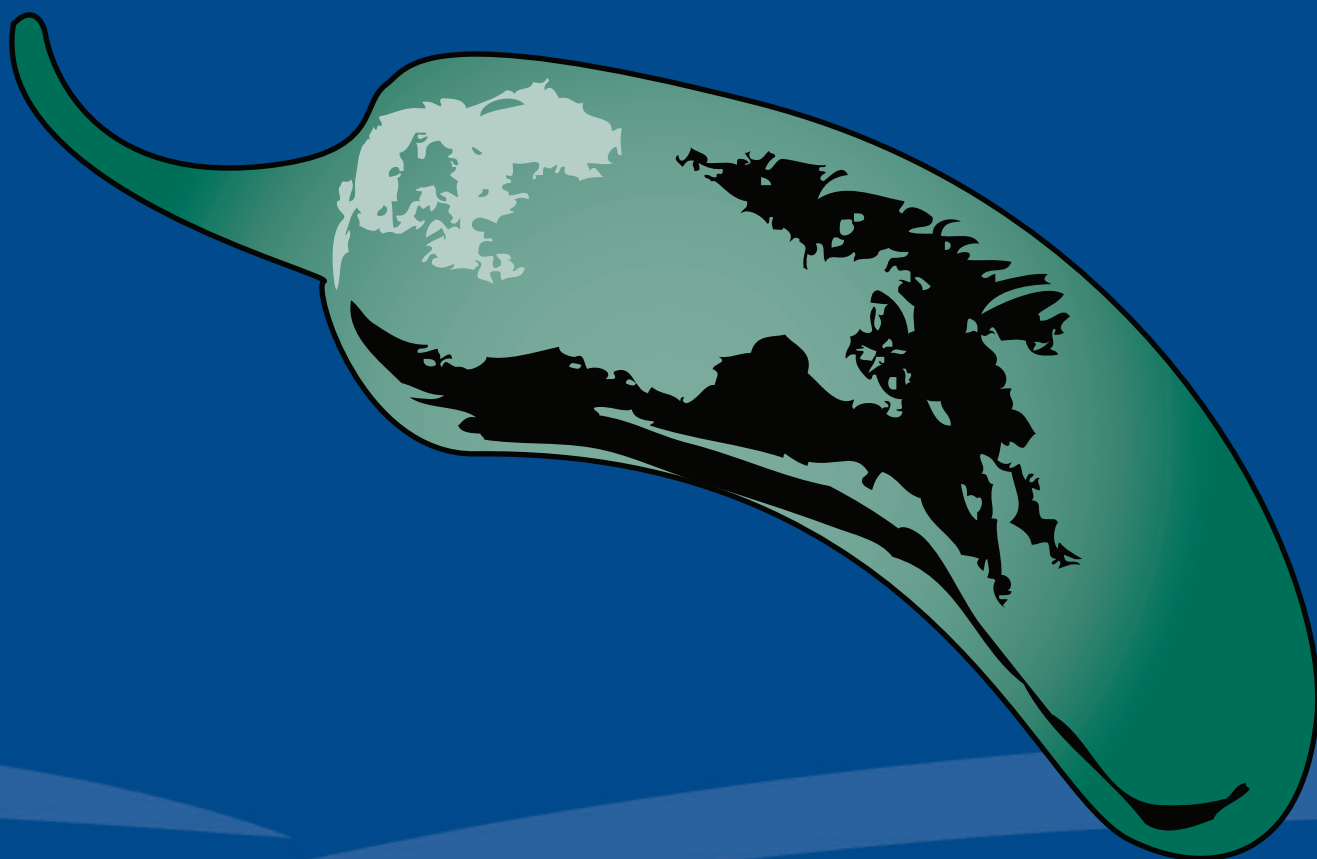
California – The Food Bank of Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties developed a 5-minute video in English and Spanish that answers 12 commonly asked questions about SNAP benefits. The video was distributed to health and social service agencies on California’s central coast.



DISASTER OUTREACH:

THE HEAT IS ON

– REACHING OUT AFTER A DISASTER



SNAP OUTREACH DURING DISASTERS

What are disaster SNAP benefits and how does the program work?

After a natural or man-made disaster occurs and a Presidential declaration of disaster with a provision for individual assistance has been made, State agencies can request approval from the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to activate disaster SNAP benefits and provide temporary food assistance to households. FNS approves operation of disaster SNAP benefits once grocery stores are operational and telecommunications and electricity have been restored. Disaster SNAP benefits are delivered on Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards, similar to regular SNAP benefits, and require telephones and electricity for redemption. Generally, States request and FNS approves operation of disaster SNAP benefits a week or more after a disaster has occurred.

Disaster SNAP benefits help people buy food when they are experiencing economic hardships as a result of the disaster (loss of jobs, loss of food because of power outages, damages to home and personal possessions, etc.). Although every State agency maintains a general disaster SNAP plan for use in time of disaster, State agencies do tailor disaster benefit policies and procedures to fit the community's specific needs following each disaster, so every disaster SNAP program is unique.

How do disaster SNAP benefits differ from SNAP?

Disaster SNAP benefits are different from SNAP in some important ways:

- Families who are not normally eligible for SNAP may be eligible for disaster SNAP benefits. During the eligibility process, a household's short-term, disaster-related expenses are considered.
- Students, strikers, noncitizens and people subject to work requirements are not barred from disaster SNAP benefits as they are from SNAP.
- Rules surrounding verification, income and resources are relaxed.
- Recipients receive the maximum SNAP benefit for their household size.
- The period to apply for disaster SNAP benefits is short, generally one week.
- State agencies may operate mass application sites at fairgrounds, stadiums or other easily accessible locations that can serve large populations. For very small disasters, State agencies may provide disaster SNAP benefits out of social services offices. All applications for disaster SNAP benefits are distributed to prospective clients and collected at these sites.

How are ongoing SNAP participants aided in the disaster SNAP benefits program?

Aid to SNAP participants will depend upon the disaster. Your State agency may decide to issue replacement benefits for lost or damaged food. Additionally, a supplement or additional benefits may be provided to ensure participants receive the maximum level of benefits for their household size. Sometimes these benefits are paid automatically – in other cases, participants need to complete an affidavit attesting to disaster losses to qualify.

Why should my agency conduct outreach during disasters?

Since each disaster SNAP plan and operation is unique and many participants are first-time applicants, your agency must be prepared to clearly communicate what benefits are available, who is eligible, how to apply, and how to use SNAP benefits. Because disaster SNAP benefits generally operate for a one-week period, providing timely and detailed information is essential.

In addition, SNAP participants may need to know how to verify food loss for replacement benefits, how to obtain supplemental benefits, or whether or not benefits will be automatically replaced.



Because the days following a disaster are often chaotic, news about disaster SNAP benefits might be overshadowed by other disaster-related issues, or misinformation might be circulated. Ongoing outreach is essential to correcting misperceptions and providing factual information to disaster victims about the nutrition benefits to which they may be entitled.

Why should my agency partner with community and faith-based organizations during disasters?

Some disaster victims will turn to trusted organizations in the community for information and help. Affected people may already be interacting with these organizations for other needs, such as clothing, shelter, or medical care. These organizations are in a position to help your agency provide accurate information about disaster SNAP benefits to potentially eligible individuals.

Additionally, community and faith-based organizations might have personnel in parts of the affected areas where your staff are not present. They may also have other resources that are useful during disasters, such as media contacts, Web sites, toll-free numbers and translators.

How can my agency involve these community organizations in our disaster preparedness discussions?

Convene a “get-ready” meeting before a disaster occurs. Invite grocers, community organizations, and faith-based groups. At this meeting, consider conducting a needs assessment. A needs assessment will identify existing outreach services and resources in your community. It will also provide your agency with a better understanding of the number and nature of diverse groups in your community. In addition, it will help you identify geographic areas most prone to disasters, or communities, locations, and neighborhoods that may need unique assistance in the aftermath of a disaster, such as language assistance. Information identified in the needs assessment will not only help you effectively prepare to coordinate outreach efforts during a disaster, but will also reinforce cooperation for ongoing outreach.

Can my State agency include a disaster SNAP contingency plan in its State outreach plan?

Yes. A State outreach plan may include contingency plans for SNAP outreach during a disaster. Preparation is critical to adequate disaster response. It enables a State to quickly implement activities that have been carefully planned.

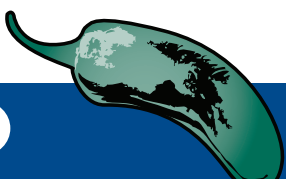
When disaster SNAP benefits are operationalized, what outreach activities can be reimbursed by FNS?

To be eligible for reimbursement, partners must secure approval from the State agency in advance of implementing any disaster SNAP outreach activities. Allowable outreach activities during a disaster may include:

- Distributing information about disaster SNAP benefits to disaster victims;
- Funding a toll-free number;
- Distributing information to media outlets;
- Translating disaster SNAP outreach materials into other languages;
- Prescreening activities that do not involve accessing the State eligibility system or existing client case files;
- Distributing and helping prospective participants fill out disaster SNAP benefit application forms at disaster sites; and/or
- Greeting prospective participants at disaster SNAP benefit application entrances and directing them to appropriate areas.

How can I learn more about disaster SNAP benefits?

For complete information on conducting SNAP outreach during times of disaster, please see the Disaster SNAP Guidance on the FNS Web site: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/disasters/disaster.htm>.



BEFORE A DISASTER STRIKES

STEP 1

DEVELOP
A PLAN

Convene or participate in a “get-ready” meeting with community and faith-based partners.

- Explain how disaster SNAP benefits can provide food assistance to those adversely affected by disasters, whether man-made or due to natural causes.
- Explain how disaster victims already enrolled in the regular SNAP may be assisted with replacement benefits.
- Discuss strengths and needs of each partner in terms of disaster response.
- Discuss what community partner staff can and cannot do during a disaster.
- Plan and document how you will work together to prepare for potential future disasters. Be very specific about the best ways to get the word out, how that can be done in an emergency, and who will do it.
- Develop a contact list of participating members with multiple ways of reaching each party in the event of a disaster. Identify who will be responsible for periodically updating this information and on what schedule.
- Discuss what resources

STEP 2

DEVELOP OR UPDATE
A NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- If your community has not conducted a needs assessment, take steps to complete one. Consider if volunteers or staff will complete the needs assessment.
- If your community has previously conducted a needs assessment, reevaluate the findings and update corresponding next steps.
- Identify existing outreach services and resources in your community.
- Identify partners with special expertise, such as ethnic media contacts or translators.
- Identify vulnerable populations in your community, such as those in certain geographic areas or those with particular language needs, who may be most affected by potential disasters or who will need extra support accessing help following the disaster.

10 STEPS TO PLAN
FOR DISASTER SNAP
OUTREACH

- 1 | Develop a plan
- 2 | Develop or update a needs assessment
- 3 | Add language to State Outreach plan
- 4 | Describe outreach activities in the State Disaster SNAP plan
- 5 | Plan for media activities
- 6 | Maintain good relationships with partners
- 7 | Implement activities in your outreach plan
- 8 | Develop new partnerships
- 9 | Connect those receiving disaster SNAP benefits with SNAP
- 10 | Thank staff and partners and share lessons learned



STEP 3

ADD LANGUAGE TO THE STATE OUTREACH PLAN

- Develop a State outreach plan and add a contingency plan for outreach activities to respond to a disaster.
- If you already have a State Outreach Plan, add a contingency section for SNAP outreach during disasters.
- Include a list of allowable activities and identify which agency will handle each activity. Advanced planning improves your disaster response. Knowing you have the tools and resources in place will reduce stress and improve your ability to respond to a disaster, when or if it occurs.
- Include drafts or template materials that your State might use as part of your media response.
- Maintain a hard copy of the contingency plan in a secure offsite location. If there is a disaster, you might not have access to a computer or your office.

STEP 4

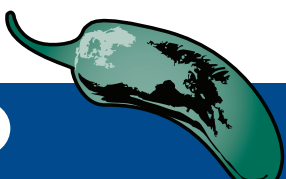
DESCRIBE OUTREACH ACTIVITIES IN THE STATE DISASTER SNAP PLAN

- Describe your disaster outreach activities in your State Disaster SNAP Plan. If your State does not have an outreach plan, provide sufficient details on outreach activities and contacts. If your State agency has an outreach plan, make references to that plan.
- Develop templates of outreach materials, such as flyers, posters, and a Web page, so that they can be finalized quickly when needed. Consider the alternatives for printing and distributing in an emergency situation.
- Maintain a hard copy of the plan in a secure offsite location. If there is a disaster, you might not have access to a computer or your office.
- Identify a community liaison whose sole responsibility during a disaster is to coordinate and share information between the State agency and community partners.

STEP 5

PLAN FOR MEDIA ACTIVITIES DURING A DISASTER

- Develop and articulate State policy on who initiates or handles media inquiries in your State Disaster SNAP Plan and State Outreach Plan.
- Identify State spokesperson(s) in the plans. There may be more than one contact.
- Develop a list of media outlets (television, radio, or print) for disaster SNAP outreach. These outlets can inform your audience of details about disaster SNAP benefits when it is implemented.
- Include phone numbers, fax numbers and addresses so that you have multiple ways to reach the media.



STEP 6

MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARTNERS

- Keep in touch with your community and faith-based partners. Check with them periodically to confirm their roles and responsibilities and to update your contact lists.
- If your State contracts outreach activities to organizations, contractual oversight will require more frequent contacts.
- Consider holding a practice drill, role-playing game or table-top exercise to practice what you will do in the event of a real disaster.

WHEN A DISASTER STRIKES

STEP 7

IMPLEMENT ACTIVITIES IN YOUR OUTREACH PLAN

- Make contact with outreach partners and implement your contingency plan.
- Provide accurate and consistent messages to your partners via the community liaison, especially as you make changes to the application process, application sites, or other aspects of the program that affect applicant eligibility and access.
- Remind State employees in disaster areas of media procedures. This is important because you may have employees from other States with different media policies

STEP 8

DEVELOP NEW PARTNERSHIPS OR CONDUCT ADDITIONAL OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

- Initiate partnerships with new organizations to meet unanticipated needs.
- Expand outreach activities, if needed. Don't feel limited. You may conduct necessary activities even though they are not referenced in your State Outreach Plan.



WHEN THE DISASTER IS OVER

STEP 9**CONNECT DISASTER SNAP VICTIMS TO
THE REGULAR SNAP**

- Disaster SNAP benefits recipients who wish to apply for the regular SNAP will need to follow the normal SNAP application process. Some households may have questions about SNAP requirements or may need assistance in filling out application forms or securing verification documents. Others may need other types of assistance such as clothing or household goods. Your partners can play an important role to help you provide the services your client might need during this stressful time.
- Let the media and other opinion leaders know how disaster SNAP benefits and regular SNAP responded to the needs of families and the broader community.

STEP 10**THANK STAFF AND PARTNERS FOR THEIR EFFORTS
AND SHARE LESSONS LEARNED**

- Recognize employees and partners for a job well done.
- Make changes to your outreach and disaster plans based on what worked and what didn't work.
- Visit the FNS Web site and prepare promising practices for disaster outreach:
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/promising/Default.htm>



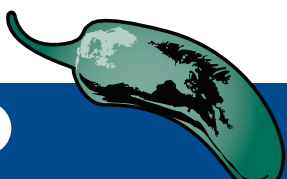
10 IDEAS FOR DISASTER SNAP OUTREACH

- 1 | Inform the media.** Use the media to spread messages about the availability of disaster SNAP benefits. Be sure the identified spokesperson has the timely and correct information and an updated media list. Be sure to follow your State's procedures.
- 2 | Coordinate with other responders.** Identify the liaison to other first (disaster) responders in the community. Be sure that they have the correct information about disaster SNAP benefits and can share it with disaster victims they serve.
- 3 | Engage grocery store partners.** Provide information to grocers to post, distribute in grocery bags or announce in stores.
- 4 | Enlist faith- and community-based partners.** Enlist the help of your partners to distribute information (who can apply, when, where) about disaster SNAP benefits or to perform other duties as described in your State Disaster or State Outreach Plan(s).
- 5 | Use community volunteers.** Engage volunteers to perform activities such as answering the State/local toll-free number, distributing informational materials at grocery stores and monitoring SNAP lines to make sure potential applicants are in the correct line at disaster sites.
- 6 | Enlist community translators.** Work with community translators to translate news releases for ethnic media and informational materials and to serve as interpreters during SNAP interviews.
- 7 | Provide a toll-free number.** Set up cellular phones to use as disaster SNAP benefit informational numbers if land lines are not working.
- 8 | Use the remote telephone feature.** Use the remote message feature of your telephone system, if available, to announce disaster SNAP benefit information. If this is not available, contact FNS to ask about using the national toll-free number remote messaging feature and/or contact your State SNAP EBT provider to ask if a message can be added to the customer service phone line.
- 9 | Post disaster SNAP information on your Web site.** Provide basic information, such as who may qualify, where and when to apply, and types of verification documents, if needed.
- 10 | Develop new outreach partnerships.** Develop new outreach partnerships to provide disaster SNAP benefit information to disaster victims, based on what is occurring in your community.



WEB-BASED RESOURCES

FNS Disaster Assistance Home Page	http://www.fns.usda.gov/disasters/disaster.htm
SNAP Disaster Handbook	http://www.fns.usda.gov/disasters/disaster.htm
Outreach State Plan Guidance	http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/default.htm
Partnership Section in State Toolkit	http://www.fns.usda.gov/SNAP/outreach/pdfs/toolkit/2010/State/SNAP_state_Chapter02.pdf
FNS press releases	http://www.fns.usda.gov/cga/PressReleases/PressReleases.htm
FRAC Disaster Handbook	http://www.frac.org/pdf/dfsp05.pdf
Louisiana Press Releases	http://www.dss.state.la.us/index.cfm?md=newsroom&tmp=category&nid=20&pnid=0&pid=0&catid=2



SAMPLE PRESS RELEASES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

[Date]

[Name of Appropriate Contact]

[Area Code and Phone Number]

[Cell Phone]

Disaster Victims Now Eligible for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

[City, State] – Many victims of [disaster] Many victims of [disaster] are now eligible for disaster SNAP benefits.

[Quote about significance of nutrition assistance following a disaster,] said [State official.]

The United States Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service has approved disaster SNAP benefits to allow victims of *[disaster]* in *[eligible geographic area]* to receive nutrition assistance. Eligible households will receive an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card to use to purchase food at retail locations. Eligibility criteria for disaster SNAP benefits are different than for the regular Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Residents who have experienced *[describe unique disaster elements that may make residents eligible for the disaster SNAP benefits]* may be eligible. Other eligibility factors include *[list eligibility criteria.]*

Applications for disaster SNAP benefits will be accepted until *[date]*. Residents of *[eligible geographic locations]* can apply for disaster SNAP benefits at the following locations and times:

Location: *[address]*

Hours of Operation: *[hours]*

Those seeking to apply for disaster benefits from SNAP are encouraged to bring verification of identity and residency, if possible, with them when they apply. If the applicant’s documents have been lost in the disaster, disaster SNAP staff can provide guidance on how applicants can prove their identity. *[List other documents that should be available at application or other information about needed verifications.]*

More information about disaster SNAP benefits is available on *[Web site address and toll-free number]*.

###



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

[Date]

[Name of Appropriate Contact]

[Area Code and Phone Number]

[Cell Phone]

Deadline To Apply for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Benefits Is *[add when]*

[City, State] – Victims of *[disaster]* are reminded that they have until *[deadline]* to apply for disaster nutrition assistance from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). SNAP's disaster benefits enable those who have experienced loss, such as *[list criteria]*, as a result of the *[disaster]* to receive SNAP benefits on an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card to purchase food at retail stores.

[Quote about the importance of applying before time runs out.] said *[State official]*. *[Quote about how many benefits have been issued to date.]*

Residents of *[geographic location]* may be eligible for disaster nutrition assistance from the Food and Nutrition Service. Provisions of disaster SNAP benefits are different from the regular SNAP, so those affected by *[disaster]* in the designated locations are encouraged to apply to find out if they may be eligible for benefits under this program.

Applications will be accepted at the following locations until *[deadline.]*

Location: *[address]*

Hours of Operation: *[hours]*

Those seeking to apply for disaster SNAP benefits are encouraged to bring verification of identity and residency, if possible, with them when they apply. If the applicant's documents have been lost in the disaster, disaster SNAP staff can provide guidance on how applicants can prove their identity. *[List other documents that should be available at application or other information about needed verifications.]*

More information about the disaster SNAP benefits is available on *[Web site address and toll-free number.]*

###



OPTIMIZE YOUR PRESS RELEASE FOR
**FRUITFUL
RESULTS**



OPTIMIZED PRESS RELEASES

What is an optimized press release?

An [optimized press release](#) is similar to a [traditional release](#). It contains news-worthy and buzz-worthy information that you want to convey to your audience. It includes a strong and catchy headline, a summary, and an introductory paragraph. Like a traditional press release, you can also include quotes and references.

Unlike a traditional release, optimized releases can include [hyperlinks](#), images, and videos, and are often edited to include “keywords” to help search engines find and index the releases.

The object of this toolkit is to teach you how to take your traditional press release and transform it into an optimized release and then distribute it online.

DEFINITION		
Optimized Press Release	=	Traditional Press Release + Keyword Research + Hyperlinks + Online Distribution

TIPS

- Looking to get more information about any of these topics? Refer to the “[Tutorial](#)” section.
- If you need help with a specific word, check the [Glossary](#) for definitions.

Why is it important to optimize releases and distribute them online?

The Internet is growing. More and more, people are getting their news online. Almost 40 percent of people get their news online on a regular basis, compared to 13 percent 10 years ago. That means that if you want people to find your news, you should make sure it is online.

Optimizing your release will help to make sure that people who are looking online for your news can find it.

How do I start?

In the following pages, we will discuss several basic steps you can take to optimize a press release. We also provide an example. Should you wish to explore these steps in more depth, we encourage you to read this information and then review the quick tutorial that follows, which will shed even more light for you on the subject of optimized press releases and what is entailed in order to perform each step.

FAST FACT: Almost 40 percent of people get their news online on a regular basis.



STEP 1

USE KEYWORD RESEARCH

Think of [keyword research](#) as “the psychology of search.” When Internet users search for information using search engines, they are asking for specific information. Therefore, you want to use “key” language in your press release.

For instance, if you are writing about conjunctivitis, but everyone is searching online for “pink eye,” they may never find your information— even if it is exactly what they want!

FNS has developed some keywords that pertain to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. They are available for you to use [here](#).

You may want to build on this work by doing your own research. Performing keyword research lets you learn the words and phrases that online searchers use most often to look for your subject matter. Visit the “[Tutorial](#)” section to learn how to conduct your own keyword research and to obtain a list of online tools you can use.

STEP 2

MODIFY THE TRADITIONAL RELEASE FOR THE ONLINE AUDIENCE

After you compile key research terms used by your Internet audience, you can identify the ideal wording to use in your release. You should insert this word or phrase into your release as much as possible.

While you want to insert your one keyword or key phrase as often as possible, there are a few areas that are more important than others when optimizing a release. These are the areas that the search engine sees as more important and uses to determine what your release is about. The key areas are:

- Headline
- Summary or subhead
- First paragraph (or first 250 words)
- Hyperlinks (covered in depth on page [J10](#))

STEP 3

INSERT HYPERLINKS

[Hyperlinks](#) should be placed where you think your reader would want more information. Often, it makes sense to hyperlink the name of your organization to your Web site the first time your organization’s name appears in the release. Other than that, the placement is up to you. It is better to concentrate the bulk of your URLs towards the beginning of the release.

TIP

- You want to include your keyword or key phrase about 5 times for every 100 words — but in real terms that is very hard to do. It is always more important to make sure your release reads well.



Internet users expect that you will include hyperlinks in your release, but you should also spell out the Web address of your main site, in case someone prints your release. One place you can include the full Web site address is at the end of your release or in your organization's boiler plate.

For more information on hyperlinks and why they are important to include in online press releases, visit the “[Tutorial](#)” section.

STEP 4 | SELECT AN ONLINE SERVICE TO DISTRIBUTE YOUR OPTIMIZED RELEASE

You will need to choose an online service to distribute your release. There are many online vendors that can distribute your release, with different features and different prices. Therefore, you should choose the service that fits your budget and also meets your distribution needs. Some services are much more expensive, but will distribute your release to traditional wire services and online channels, such as Yahoo! News. Other options are free, but do not distribute your release to anyone. Instead, these services rely on you to send the release URL to your media and other contacts.

Some Optimized Release Distribution Options

- PRWeb www.prweb.com
- MultiVu <http://www.multivu.com/>
- EON <http://eon.businesswire.com/portal/site/eon/>
- PitchEngine <http://www.pitchengine.com/>
- MarketWire <http://www.marketwire.com/>

For more information on how to choose which online service is right for your release and your organization, visit the “[Tutorial](#)” section.

STEP 5 | MEASURE YOUR SUCCESS

Unlike traditional wire services, most online distribution services will not provide you with a pick-up or coverage report. However, many online distribution services will provide the number of people who read or download the release directly from their Web site.

For additional recommendations on how to evaluate the relative success of your release, please see the “[Tutorial](#)” section.

TIPS

- Don't use too many URLs in one sentence or short paragraph — it can make your text difficult to read and can be distracting.
- You should use no more than 1 hyperlink per 100 words of your release. So, if your release is 525 words long, you should include no more than 5 hyperlinks.



OPTIMIZING A RELEASE: AN EXAMPLE

In this section, you can see how an actual traditional release was optimized and then distributed online. In this example certain vendors and products were used, but for your release some tools may be more applicable and appropriate than others.

The Traditional Release



The above example of a traditional release might look familiar to you. When you begin to work towards distributing an online release, the first step is to review your traditional release and identify the key subject areas. You should also compile a list of what you think people who are looking for this type of information would type into an Internet search engine.

For the above example, some of the key concepts and ideas were: food stamps, SNAP, USDA, FNS, food, nutrition, Farm Bill, food assistance, EBT, etc.

Conducting Keyword Research

Next, using an online keyword research tool (for this example Keyword Discovery is used), look up all the concepts you thought of in step one. Keep track of how the terms compare to each other. For instance, in the previous example, we found that “apply for food stamps” is used almost three times more often than “applying for food stamps.”

Your goal is to come up with one phrase or word that is the central subject matter of your release, and which is the most searched-for way of describing that subject. So, if the release were all about applying for food stamps, your key phrase would be “apply for food stamps.”



Select	Query	Searches
<input type="checkbox"/>	nutrition	19,768
<input type="checkbox"/>	usda	11,145
<input type="checkbox"/>	food stamps	6,255
<input type="checkbox"/>	hunger	1,931
<input type="checkbox"/>	nutrition facts	1,554
<input type="checkbox"/>	food nutrition	1,410
<input type="checkbox"/>	diet nutrition	1,299
<input type="checkbox"/>	foodstamps	1,294
<input type="checkbox"/>	ebt	1,276
<input type="checkbox"/>	food stamp	654

In what follows, you can see how often some terms are searched for compared to other terms. “Nutrition,” “USDA,” and “food stamps” are the top three.

“Nutrition” is searched for the most of all the terms. However, people who type “nutrition” into a search engine could be searching for a variety of things. Try typing “nutrition” into Google – the top results are nutritional guides filed with calorie information and healthy eating

tips. It will not hurt to include the word “nutrition” in the release, but it should not be the main keyword, especially because “USDA” and “food stamps” are really much more relevant to this particular release.

Looking at the [traditional release](#), you should find places in the key areas (headline, summary, and first paragraph) to insert these words. Remember, keeping your release readable and interesting is always the priority!

Insert Hyperlinks

We stressed earlier how important it is to include hyperlinks in a release. The next step is to decide where you want to hyperlink to.

For the press release on the next page, the choices were fairly obvious. The release is about the name change of the Food Stamp Program to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), so you want to drive people to the landing page for that program. Secondly, we wanted to link to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service homepage so people can also learn more broadly about the available programs.

Ideally, you should insert your hyperlinks into the body of your press release and ensure that the text in the hyperlink includes some of your keywords. It is also a good idea to include hyperlinks early in your release both for the benefit of search engines and also so that people will see the links even if they do not scroll through your entire release.

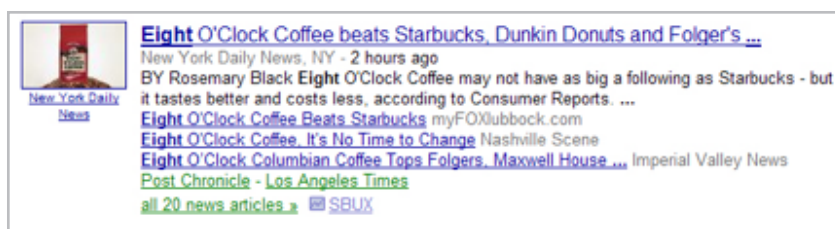
Add Assets and Tag Your Release

One of the most notable features of online optimized press releases is that they can include logos, images, attached files, and video. It is always a good idea to include at least one image or logo if you can – it will make your release stand out more in the search engine results.

TIPS

- Spelling out acronyms is always a good idea. In this case, many people are not yet familiar with the new Federal Food Stamp Program name—the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The full name of SNAP also happens to include “Nutrition,” which is a very highly searched for word.
- In the case of SNAP, it is also helpful to use “food stamps” somewhere in your release because “food stamps” is still very much in people’s minds and is very likely to be searched for. Over time, as SNAP becomes more familiar to the public, this may change.
- In general, for online releases, your headline should be about 22 words, your summary or subhead should be about 2 sentences, and your release should be about 1,000 words. These lengths are ideal for search engines, and also reflect online consumers’ short attention span.





Example: Images displayed alongside news results on a search engine results page

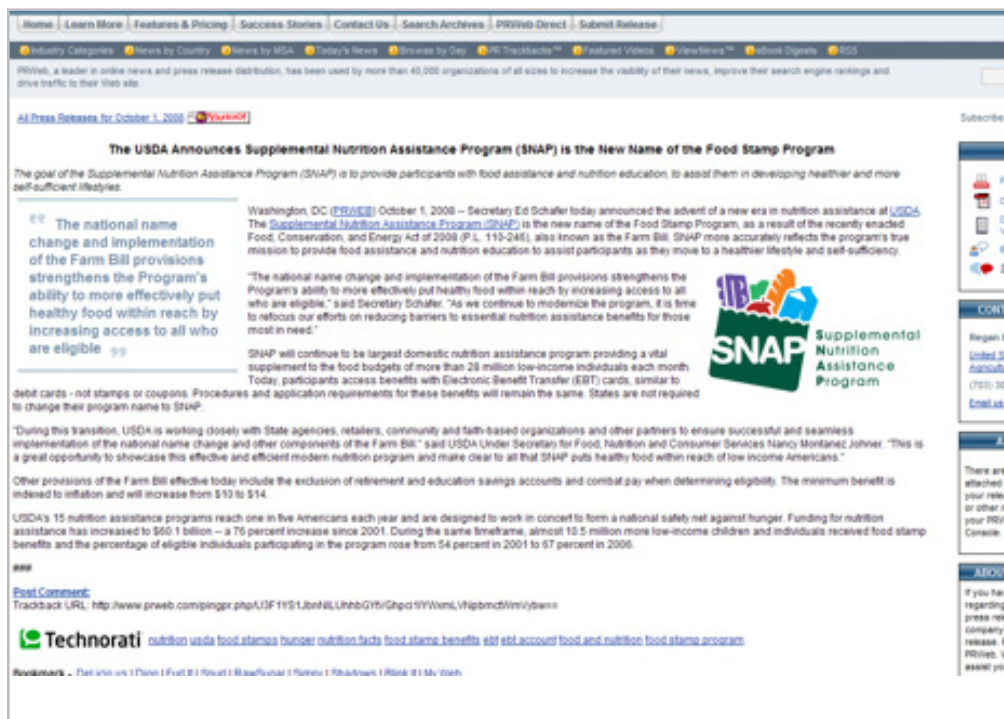
In addition to making your release stand out more in search engine results, adding assets to your release increases the depth of your offering — you have turned your press release into a complete package.

Depending on the vendor you choose to use, you may also be given the option to add “tags” or a “list of keywords” to your release. These are mechanisms to help people find and share your release. Use words from your keyword research for these fields.

Review the Final Product and Distribute

Of course you always want to review a release before you distribute it — as it is better to be safe than sorry. With some online release vendors, you can update the version of the release that resides on the vendor’s site, but you can’t update what has already been distributed to the media or any of the service’s subscribers.

Following is a screen shot of what the optimized version of the SNAP release looked like when it was distributed online.



TUTORIAL

OPTIMIZED PRESS RELEASES: THE BASICS

What are some differences between the optimized and traditional press releases?

An optimized release is often shorter than a [traditional release](#). The optimized release has been adapted for Internet use and is easier to find by search engines. The optimized releases are written to include key search words. These key search words are words used by your audiences.

An optimized release often includes video, images, and other documents such as research papers or presentations.

Lastly, an optimized release is typically distributed by online press release distribution services, rather than by you. These services specifically target online media channels, such as Google News, Yahoo! News, and other news outlets.

What are some benefits to using an optimized press release?

Benefits include your ability to:

- Distribute your news directly to consumers in addition to media
- Use hyperlinks that will drive people to your Web site
- Use video, photos, or logos
- Enable audiences to download materials
- Take advantage of tools such as “[social bookmarking](#)” and “[tagging](#)” to allow people to easily share your news with others
- Increase traffic (Internet visitors) to your Web site
- Drive your audience to a particular location on the Internet (a specific page, for example)
- Increase the online visibility and awareness of your organization or event
- Raise the visibility of your Web page on search engine results pages

My traditional press releases already show up online, so why should I optimize a release?

People who are getting their news online use [search engines](#). The majority of online searches are done through Google. There are other popular search engines as well, including Yahoo! and MSN.

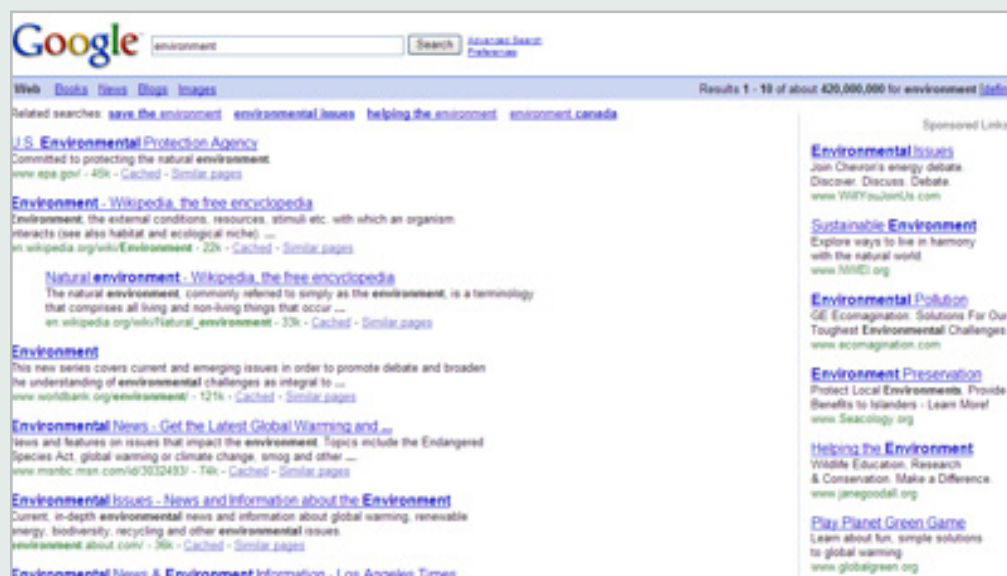
FAST FACT: Over 60 percent of online searches use Google.



Search engines are important because you want your news to be easily found and indexed. Search engine optimization (often referred to as “SEO”) is the process that helps organize the information on a Web page to make it most easily found and recorded by search engines. Optimizing your release for search engines will make sure your information is getting to the people who are searching for it.

When I search for something using a search engine, different results appear in different areas of the page. What are the different sections, and what do they mean?

You often see two types of results when you search for something using an Internet search engine like Google. One result is called “Paid Search” or “Sponsored Links.” These are often on the right side of the screen, but can also appear at the top or bottom. Regardless of where they appear, they will always be labeled as “Sponsored Links” or highlighted with different colors. Think of these as advertisements. Someone is paying money to display an ad to people who search for particular content online. This can be a very powerful tool, but not one covered in this toolkit.



The other type of result is called “Natural Search Results” or “Organic Search Results.” These results are ranked by the search engines based on a variety of factors and cannot be bought. The closer to the top of the list a result or “hit” is, the more relevant and valuable the result is to the string of words you used to search by. The goal of search engine optimization is to get your information at or near the top of the list.



KEYWORD RESEARCH

FNS has provided a basic list of relevant keyword research results, but you may wish or need to supplement these results with additional research of your own. To do so, follow the steps below:

- 1** | Deciding what the main subject areas are in your release.
- 2** | Think of other ways to say those same ideas and make a list.
- 3** | Using an online tool (see options in the sidebar), look up each word or phrase on your list.
- 4** | Keep track of how often each term is searched for. Organize your list from most-searched-for to least-searched-for.
- 5** | Choose the keywords that are both descriptive of your content and most popular according to the keyword research tools.

Free Online Keyword Research Tools:

- Keyword Discovery <http://keyworddiscovery.com/search.html>
- Google Keyword Tool <https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>
- Word Tracker <http://www.wordtracker.com/>

Why do I need to use a tool to tell me which words to use?

The way people search for information online is not always intuitive. For instance, “applying for food stamps,” “food stamp application,” and “apply for food stamps” are three phrases with almost identical meanings. In any traditional press release, you might use all three interchangeably.

However, keyword data from an online tool will tell you that “apply for food stamps” is used almost three times more often than “applying for food stamps.”

The numbers in the “Total” column represent how often the term was searched for from a 10-percent sample of search engines over the last 12 months. Use the numbers to choose one term over another, but do not get hung up on the numbers themselves.

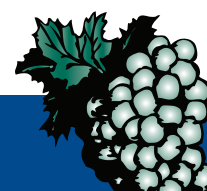
Query: food stamps

Results 1 - 100 of 5964

Page: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Search Term	Total
food stamps	6225
apply for food stamps	612
florida food stamps	514
food stamps application	248
texas food stamps	238
applying for food stamps	223
food stamps florida	211
indiana food stamps	204
texas department of human services food stamps	193
apply for food stamps online	180
emergency food stamps	145
how to apply for food stamps	144
food stamps eligibility	125
application for food stamps	122
alabama food stamps	116
michigan food stamps	88
ebt food stamps	83
access florida food stamps	80
louisiana food stamps	78
how to get food stamps	75
california food stamps	74

Example: Searching “food stamps”
Keyword Discovery



HYPERLINKS

What is a hyperlink?

A hyperlink is a word, phrase, or image that you can click on to jump to a new document or a new section within the current document. Hyperlinks are found in nearly all Web pages, and let you click from page to page. Text hyperlinks are often blue and underlined, but don't have to be. Hyperlinks are often called just “links.”

Example: Clicking [here](http://www.fns.usda.gov) will take you to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service home page is an example of a hyperlink. Clicking on the blue text, or “hypertext,” will take you to a destination URL, in this case <http://www.fns.usda.gov>.

Why should I include hyperlinks in my online press release?

It is critical to include hyperlinks in your online release. Not doing so is a huge missed opportunity. Hyperlinks are important because they:

- Lead readers of your release to your Web site; and
- Count as objective votes for your Web site in the eyes of search engines.

Leading readers of your release to your Web site is important if you want to increase traffic to your site, where they can gather more information and ideally become repeat visitors, as they learn to view your site as an authority.

The second point is equally important to accomplishing the goals of an optimized release. As your press release is picked up by other Web sites, the release will include the hyperlinks you've inserted. Search engines look at these hyperlinks very favorably, and having many hyperlinks pointing to your site helps your site rank higher in search engines.



CHOOSING A SERVICE

There are many services that will distribute your release online at various price levels. These companies also have customer service representatives who can help you determine which service is right for you and answer any questions you might have. Here are some additional factors you should consider when choosing a service to use.

Things To Consider

1 | BILINGUAL OR LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH

Not all vendors offer the same services. Some have very sophisticated translation and targeting options, while others have no distribution for languages other than English, although they will post the release on their site. Make sure to ask questions before selecting your service if other languages are a consideration.

2 | USE OF IMAGES, VIDEO, OR LOGOS

Most optimized release vendors let you include images and logos. Most will also let you include video — some simply require that the video is hosted on YouTube.com, while others need the actual video file to be uploaded. If a video is important, check to see which vendors include video in their fees.

3 | MEASUREMENTS

There are different levels of metrics and reporting after your release has been distributed. To learn more about ways you can supplement metrics that your release service provides, see the “[Tutorial](#)” section.

4 | EXTRA FEATURES

Many services provide the option to attach downloadable files, “[tags](#),” and “[social bookmarks](#).” Tags and social bookmarks are Web 2.0 methods to flag what your release is about and make it easy to find and share.



What are the main differences between using a traditional wire service and an online optimized release service?

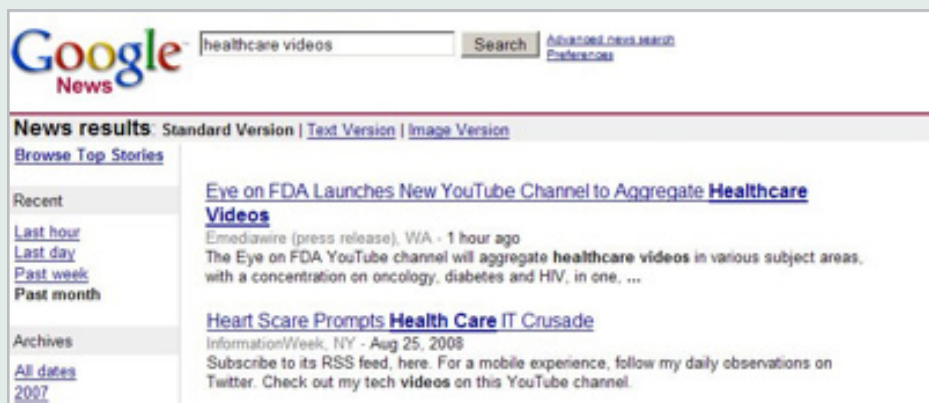
Where the release is distributed is one big difference — an online release should be more targeted to online news portals, online news search engines, and social media tools. This means that it is targeting the online news consumer and, in many cases, can reach the end user without ever being “picked up” (i.e., sought out by the media) in the traditional sense.

Depending on the service you use, the actual uploading and submission of the release may be different or similar to the experience you are used to from traditional wire services.

Optimized releases are also displayed alongside news stories in many news search engines — allowing you to control the headline, summary, and often the image associated with the search engine result. This control is crucial as more and more people find their news online. Search engine results pages are an increasingly significant opportunity to grab consumers.

In the screen capture that follows from Google News, the first result is an online optimized press release and the second result is a news story from InformationWeek. In the first example, whoever issues the press release has control over the headline and first sentence. If this release had included an image, this image would most likely have also been displayed.

In the second example, someone from InformationWeek determined what the headline and introductory sentence would be.



Example: Healthcare Videos: Optimized Release vs. News Article



MEASURING YOUR SUCCESS

Unlike traditional wire services, most online distribution services will not provide you with a pick-up or coverage report. However, many online distribution services will provide the number of people who read or downloaded the release directly from their Web site.

Depending on your goal in distributing your release online, there are different steps you can take to measure how your release performed. Some suggestions are below.

GOAL: Distribute the content of your release to news outlets

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS: As mentioned, unlike traditional wire services you may be familiar with, most online distribution services will not provide you with a pick-up or coverage report. To measure how many online news outlets have picked up your release, try using a [search engine](#) to search for the title of your release a few days after it was sent. Two popular search engines that can be used for this include Google (www.google.com) and Yahoo! (www.yahoo.com). Important: Check the related news search engines such as news.google.com and news.yahoo.com.

In addition to searching for the title of your release, you can also search for your organization name, the name of the event or speaker you are promoting, and the central topic of your release to see if the content of the release was picked up by an outlet without the full body and title of the release.

GOAL: Distribute the content of your release to partners (in addition to news outlets)

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS: Using a similar process as described above, you can also see how many blogs pick up your release. The term “blog” is short for “weblog,” and is a Web site that displays in chronological order the postings by one or more individuals. Blogs can be written by journalists, but are often written by the general public. Some blogs are read by many people, while others are read by fewer people.

You can search for your release using one of the many blog searching tools including:

- Google Blog Search <http://blogsearch.google.com/>
- Technorati <http://technorati.com/>
- IceRocket <http://www.icerocket.com/>

Technorati has a system called “Authority” to tell you how important and relevant they have determined different blogs to be. The higher a blog’s authority number, the more people are reading and linking to that particular blog.

GOAL: Increase traffic (Internet visitors) to your Web site

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS: To determine whether an online release has increased traffic to your Web site, you will need access to the traffic logs of your Web site. The person or organization who administers your Web site should be able to grant you access to these or pull information for you. You can either look for an overall increase in the number of visitors to your site in the time following the distribution of your release, or you can try to dig a bit deeper.

Most Web traffic logs should be able to tell you “Referrers” or “Referrals” to your site. This is a way of finding out where visitors to your site are coming from. If you use ABC Press Releases to distribute your release, the URL of your release will begin with www.ABCPressReleases.com, or a similar standard domain name. This allows you to search for your “Referrers” or “Referrals,” which shows how many people came from that domain name, and how many clicked through from your release.



Similarly, if you know your release was picked up by www.BestNewsSource.com, you can search for that domain in your “Referrals” or “Referrers” to find out how many people came to your site from that location.

GOAL: Drive your audience to a particular location on the Internet (a specific page, for example)

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS: You can use the same measurements as above, especially if overall traffic to your Web site has increased. If it has, and you included the specific URL you wanted people to visit, then it is likely that people were visiting that page. Most Web analytic programs will also provide you with statistics on the most popular pages on your site, which can also tell you how many people are visiting a particular page.

If the Web page you drove people to included a survey, registration for an event, or downloadable resources, you can also look for an increase in interaction with those features.

GOAL: Increase the online visibility and awareness of your organization, news, or event

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS: Search for your release on the major search engines, as well as the portion of their search engines specifically dedicated to news.

You can also search for the [keyword](#) or phrase you optimized your release for. When you type a keyword or phrase into the news searches in the immediate day or so following the distribution of your release, your release should be returned high up on the page.

Think of this as basically a billboard for your organization – even if people don’t click through to your release, they have seen your headline and in most cases your subhead or summary, and sometimes even an image or logo.

GOAL: Help increase the position of your Web page on search engine results pages

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS: This one takes longer to achieve than the others, but issuing optimized online releases with hyperlinks to your Web site is one very important element of increasing the position of your Web site on the search engine results page.

To illustrate the importance of improving your Web site’s position: 80 percent of Internet traffic begins at a search engine, according to Harris Interactive.

Getting your Web site to rank highly in search engines can take a very long time, but is worth the effort. For example, 70 percent of people will click on something on the first results page of a search engine – that is to say, on one of the first 10 results. The numbers drop significantly from there. Approximately 15 percent of people will click on the second page or results 11-20. Finally, people will click on results 21-30 on the third page only about 10 percent of the time.

SEARCH ENGINE RESULTS	CLICKS
Page 1	70%
Page 2	15%
Page 3	10%
Page 4+	5%

GOAL: Create a multimedia release that can live online and include video, photos, or downloadable resources

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS: This is more straightforward than the others. Did you include video and images in your release or downloadable materials such as white papers or presentations? If so, you have created a multimedia release. With many online optimized release services, you can update the release over time to include new images or a video from an event. This means that you can send the release URL to any contacts you have and they will have instant access to not only the text of your release, but also any additional resources you want to provide to them.



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Anchor Text

Anchor text is the part of the hyperlink that you see when you are reading a Web page, email, or document. For instance in the example [Food & Nutrition Service Home Page](#), the words “Food & Nutrition Service Home Page” are the anchor text. Anchor text is analyzed by search engines, so it is important to use relevant keywords in your hyperlinks when possible.

Hyperlink

A hyperlink is a word, phrase, or image that you can click on to jump to a new document or a new section within the current document. Hyperlinks are found in nearly all Web pages, allowing users to click their way from page to page. Text hyperlinks are often blue and underlined, but don't have to be.

Keyword (or Key Phrase)

The one word or key phrase that is the most searched for and represents the central point of your release. You want to find the right term to use for your subject matter, so that people who are searching for relevant information online will find your content.

Keyword Research

Keyword research is the practice of researching keywords (terms) relevant to your Web site or online content and determining which are actually searched upon by search engine users to find information.

Metadata

Broadly, metadata, or meta data, is data about data. In terms of the Web and search engine optimization, metadata is descriptive text that you add to the code of a Web page to help search engines identify and index the content of that page. The three most common types of metadata on a Web page are the Title, the Description and the Keywords. While the keywords and description do not appear on the actual Web page, the Title is what shows up in the top bar of your browser when you are on a Web page, such as Food & Nutrition Service Home Page on <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/>. All three areas should include keywords determined through keyword research.

Optimized Press Release

An optimized press release conveys news or information, like a traditional release does, but it also includes language that is optimized for search engines and hyperlinks to Web pages. Optimized releases are also distributed online.



Organic Search

Also referred to as ‘Natural Search,’ organic search is the opposite of paid search and search engine marketing. Organic search engine results are ranked by the search engines based on a variety of factors and cannot be bought. The closer to the top of the list a result or “hit” is, the more relevant and valuable the result is to the string of words you used to search by. By utilizing search engine optimization, over time, an organization’s information can improve its organic search results, and appear at or near the top of the list.

Paid Search

Paid search, or search engine marketing, is basically purchasing ads associated with keywords. This is the opposite of organic search. You will often see paid search ads on the search engine results page along with the organically derived search results.

Search Engine Crawler

A search engine crawler (also known as a Web spider, Web crawler or Web robot) is a program run by search engines that browses the Web in a methodical, automated manner and indexes content for the engine.

Search Engine Marketing

Search engine marketing (SEM) is the practice of paying a search engine to run ads associated with keywords. These are the ads that you see on a search engine results page.

Social Bookmarking

Social bookmarking is a method for Internet users to store, organize, search, and manage bookmarks of Web pages on the Internet with the help of metadata. In a social bookmarking system, users save links to Web pages that they want to remember and/or share.

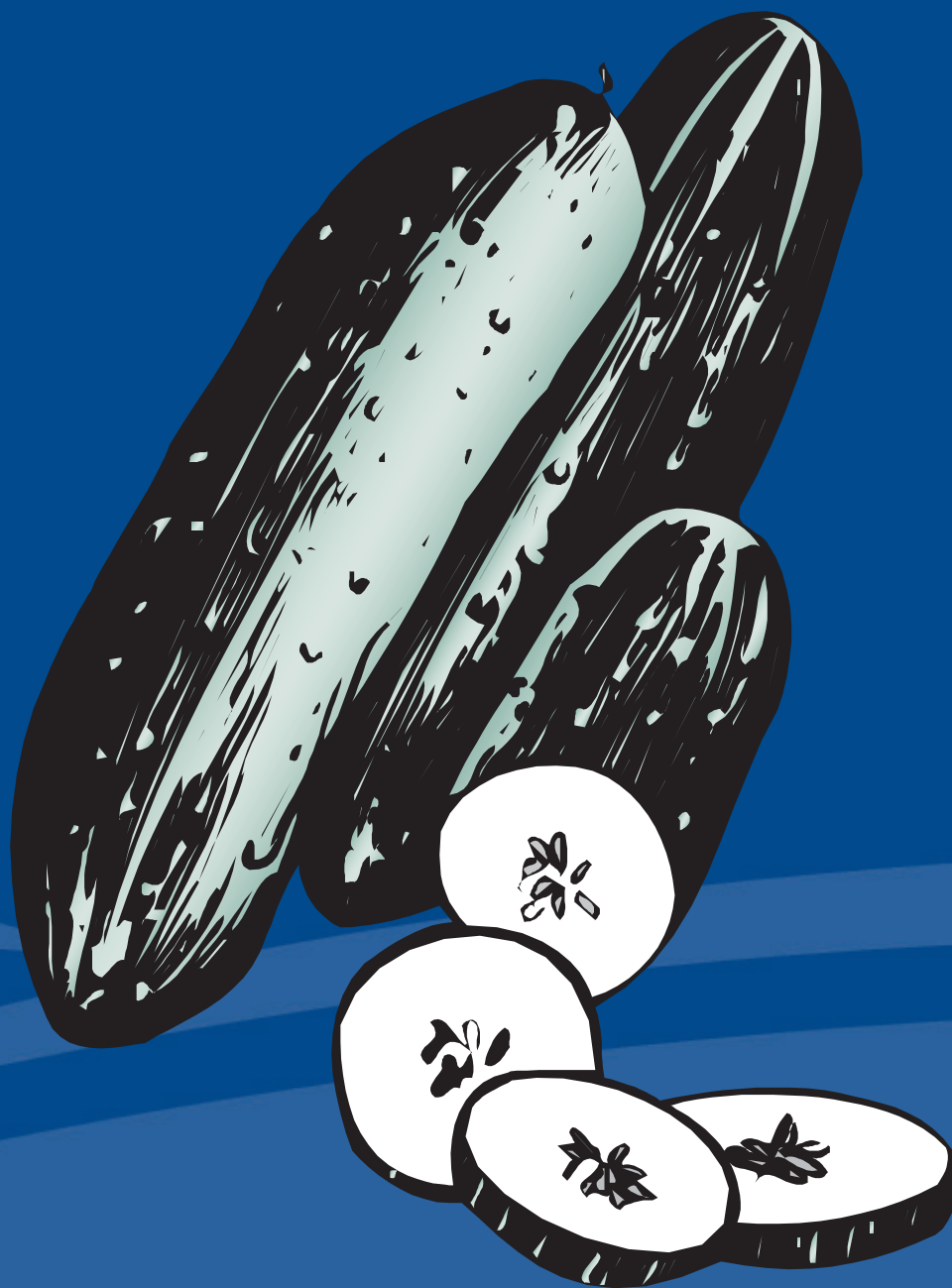
Technorati Tags

Technorati tags are labels that people use to make it easier to find blog posts, photos, and videos that are related on the popular blog search engine Technorati (www.technorati.com).

Note: Trade and company names are used in this document solely to provide information. Mention of a trade or company name does not constitute a warranty or endorsement by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to the exclusion of other products or organizations not mentioned.



IS ADVERTISING
PART OF
YOUR MENU?



AN OVERVIEW OF PAID ADVERTISING

What is paid advertising?

Paid advertising, otherwise known as paid media, is the airing of **campaign messages**—or advertisements—by purchasing space in media outlets, such as television and radio stations, newspapers, magazines, Web sites, and outdoor billboards.

The overall goal of an advertising strategy is to reach your audience and change behavior or attitudes. Here are the principal steps to reach that goal:

- 1** Surround your target audience with specific and **consistent messages** (e.g., about the nutrition assistance the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program can provide to low-income individuals and families).
- 2** Motivate your audience to get more information, such as by calling a phone number or visiting a Web site.

How does advertising differ from media relations?

Advertising is repeating your messages a guaranteed number of times.

Media relations is outreach. It can entail sending out press releases, media advisories, feature articles, and other information. The goal is to clearly state your case to interest media outlets in using the materials or asking you for more information.

Messages acquired through media relations outreach are referred to as “earned” and add depth to your paid advertising efforts.

How many times must a person hear/see an advertisement in order to take action?

According to Roper Starch Worldwide research (2001), it takes:

- 3 to 4 impressions for a person to recognize that a message is an advertisement;
- 7 to 8 impressions for a person to remember the message; and
- 10 to 18 impressions for a person to change his or her attitude/behavior as a result of hearing or seeing an advertisement.

How are paid ads different from public service announcements?

PAID ADVERTISING	PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS
You pay the media outlet to air advertisements	The media outlet airs messages free of charge to benefit target audiences
You select the best time of day, programs, and outlets to reach your target audience (market research and advertising professionals and media buyers can help)	Because they are free, you have no control over the time of day or how often messages will run
Ads have 100 percent guaranteed delivery and greater likelihood of reaching the target audience	It is difficult to gauge success due to irregularity of airing



What are the best media outlets to use to reach low-income individuals and families?

There are many options when purchasing advertising, including radio, television, print, Internet, and outdoor. A review of your organization's available budget and a community needs assessment are the best ways to identify the best media for advertising.

RADIO

FNS has found radio to be the most cost-effective way to reach low-income populations. Research has shown that low-income individuals use radio more frequently than the general population. Stations can use both produced ads (ads that have already been recorded) or radio readers, which are messages that an announcer will read between songs or weather/traffic updates (less expensive).

TELEVISION

Network and cable television advertising are the most effective ways to reach low-income audiences. Depending on the market and available advertising space, television is often the most expensive advertising medium. However, school and community cable stations may be an option to consider, as they typically charge much less than commercial stations.

ETHNIC MEDIA

Ethnic media outlets, such as radio stations and local newspapers, are available in media markets that have large immigrant populations. These outlets tend to be cost-effective. Readers/listeners trust these more than traditional media outlets. Ethnic television stations and cable networks typically are less expensive than mainstream television, but their availability varies from market to market.

PRINT

Immigrants and seniors often read the local daily newspaper, as well as community daily or weekly newspapers, which are often free. By placing print advertisements in these newspapers, you can better reach low-income people ages 60 and older. These local papers are often willing to print drop-in feature articles free of charge, because they help develop content.

OUTDOOR

This form of advertising includes billboards and transit advertisements. Organizations targeting audiences in urban communities that have public transportation systems may want to consider placing outdoor advertising. Outdoor advertising is helpful in raising awareness, yet it is most effective when coupled with advertising in other media.

INTERNET

While Internet use among low-income working poor and seniors is on the rise, low-income populations are less likely to use the Internet than any other medium. However, many Web sites that accept online advertising offer the opportunity to target by ZIP code. In this way, you can make sure your advertising is seen by people who live in lower-income areas of your media market. Online advertising also provides a built-in evaluation mechanism. You can count clicks through to your Web site from the advertisement.



HOW TO DEVELOP OR SELECT ADVERTISING

How do I develop or select advertisements?

When developing or selecting the advertisement you want to use in your paid outreach, it is critical that the ad:

1. Clearly focuses on one single important message. For example, a spot can address the stigma of SNAP, or emphasize that, by using benefits from SNAP, people can purchase healthy foods such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
2. Includes a call to action—such as calling a 1-800 number. Your ad must motivate your target audience to do something.

For more information about message development, see Chapter 3.

Does FNS have paid advertising spots that I can use?

No. However, FNS has radio scripts posted at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/radio/default.htm>, which organizations can download and record using their own actors.

If your organization is interested in purchasing its own paid advertising on television or radio stations, in print outlets, online, or on billboards, you will need to develop your own ads.

If you are interested in conducting advertising, consider contacting FNS to obtain guidance on the process of developing and placing advertising.

Does FNS have recorded public service announcements that I can use?

Yes. FNS has produced radio public service announcements at this link: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/psas.htm>. These spots cannot be used for paid advertising due to talent restrictions.

How do I produce my own radio spot using USDA's existing scripts?

Organizations can use the existing [radio scripts](#) from USDA's Web site. You will need to work with a talent agency and recording studio, which will finalize the spot for use on radio stations.



DEVELOPING AN ADVERTISING PLAN

5 Key Steps to Develop an Advertising Plan

STEP 1

DETERMINE TYPE OF ADVERTISING AND BUDGET

What type of paid advertising should you conduct? How much money is available to purchase paid advertising? What are the costs associated with developing, designing, or producing advertisements? For print and outdoor advertising, consider costs to develop, design, and/or print materials. For Web site advertising, consider costs of designing ads. If new radio or television scripts are needed, consider costs for script development, production, and talent. Don't forget that State agencies can receive reimbursement from FNS for approximately 50 percent of their administrative costs for outreach to low-income people. For more information, visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/guidance/stateplan.htm>.

STEP 2

IDENTIFY TARGET AUDIENCE

Conduct research in your State or local area to determine which low-income people have not taken advantage of nutrition assistance. Seniors? Working families? Legal immigrants? Conduct a community [needs assessment](#) to determine to whom you should reach out. More information is available in Chapter 4.

STEP 3

IDENTIFY TARGET AREA

Consider advertising in one community or “media market,” one State, or multiple States, depending on your capacity. Review the FNS participation rates and demographic data at the Federal and State levels to determine where your target audience resides. Conduct a community needs assessment as described in Chapter 4. For more information, visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/researchers/default.htm>.

STEP 4

FIND A PARTNER ORGANIZATION

Find other organizations at the State or local level with whom you can [partner](#), including another nonprofit organization or for-profit corporation with which you can pool funds. Also consider a local media outlet that will give you free or discounted advertising space. For more information about partnerships, read Chapter 2.

STEP 5

DETERMINE WHICH OUTLETS WILL REACH THE TARGET AUDIENCE

Finally, identify the top [media outlets](#) that your target audience uses. Remember, if you have a limited media buying budget, aim for lower-cost advertising options, such as radio and ethnic media. The most effective media plan is one that not only gets your message to your target audience, but gets it there with sufficient repetition.

How should I time my advertisements?

DURING THE YEAR: To increase the chance that your target audience will recognize, remember, and act on your [messages](#), plan your advertising in conjunction with other [outreach activities](#) that are taking place. It is also a good idea to plan as far ahead as possible to negotiate the best rates with media outlets. In past years, FNS has aired radio advertisements in January and February, to coincide with cold-weather months and increased heating costs; and in mid to late spring, when parents begin worrying about feeding school-age children who qualify for free or reduced-price meals. However, there are certain times of the year that are more costly:

- The fall, during an election year, when candidates air lots of advertising. The amount of available space is limited and therefore more expensive.
- Winter holidays—from Thanksgiving through New Year’s Day. The amount of available space is limited because of holiday advertising by businesses.
- Sweep periods during May and November. Networks typically schedule their best programs and run never-before-seen episodes of popular shows, which bring in more viewers.

DURING THE DAY: If you decide to purchase television and radio advertising, work with your media buying professional, media planner, or the stations to determine the best time of day to air the advertising. Ask outlets to provide research—in the form of data (not written analysis)—on the best times to reach the selected target audience and compare this information across stations.

Whom can I contact to find a local advertising agency?

Consult with your partners or contact your Chamber of Commerce to find a local advertising agency that can help. Also visit the National League of Cities’ Web site—www.nlc.org—to use its partnership pre-screening tool.



NEGOTIATING AND PLACING ADVERTISING AND FORMING PARTNERSHIPS

What are some tips to negotiate and place advertising and to form partnerships?

A paid media plan requires extensive research and in-depth analysis of market conditions and unique viewing habits of each market. Depending on the size of your budget and the complexity of your outreach plan, you should consider hiring a media buying professional to place paid advertising. A media professional will:

- Tailor buys for various media markets within a State or throughout a region;
- Weigh markets based on the number of eligible nonparticipants; and
- Negotiate rates—discounted, free, and/or matching spots—to leverage the buy.

However, if your organization has limited funds, you may decide to place your own media buy.

Tips to Make Your Own Radio Buys

Partnerships with one or more media outlets can help your organization get the deepest discounts—including additional bonus placements. Establish the partnership by:

- Scheduling an in-person meeting with the station manager, public service coordinator, and/or sales manager to explain the importance of nutrition assistance to the outlet’s consumers.
- Prepare and present background information about your organization, your outreach, your target audience, and the public benefit for the media outlet representatives.
- If an in-person meeting cannot be scheduled, prepare a cover letter and mail an information packet to the sales manager and public service director. Be sure to follow up by calling the sales manager or public service director to discuss opportunities.

Ask media outlets what they can provide free of charge as a “bonus” for the amount of money you are paying for space.

More information about forming partnerships is located in Chapter 2



MONITORING AND MEASURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ADVERTISING

How can I monitor the placements?

After placing a paid media buy, it is important to confirm that outlets aired your [messages](#). Here are some tips to aid you in monitoring the placements:

RADIO AND TELEVISION ADVERTISING: Request reports and invoices on how often and when the advertisements were played, and carefully review them to ensure the advertisements were placed according to the planned schedule.

PRINT ADVERTISING: Request “tear sheets” or copies of the ad that ran in the publication. Your organization should obtain this information from every publication in which print ads were placed.

ONLINE BANNER ADS: Make sure to work with the designer of both banner ads and the Web site so that click-through rates and impressions are monitored from the advertising.

OUTDOOR BILLBOARDS AND TRANSIT ADS: Request a proof of performance after the campaign is over, which includes pictures and details about the campaign.

What should I do if my organization does not get the number of spots paid for or if the print outlet doesn’t run the advertisement?

If in the course of monitoring your buy you learn that a radio or television station did not deliver the negotiated number of spots, or if a print outlet forgets to run an advertisement on a specific date, you should contact the outlet and ask it to “make good” on the original advertisement by running another in its place for no additional cost.

How can I measure effectiveness of advertising?

FNS has used a 1-800 number as its call to action in its [SNAP National Media Campaign](#). In fact, FNS encourages partners to advertise a phone number rather than a Web site, as many low-income individuals and families do not use computers or have access to them.

To determine how effective paid advertising has been, organizations should compare the number of phone calls during advertising flights to the number of calls made during the same period in a previous year when no advertising ran. By doing so, organizations can determine how well the advertising has reached the target audience and revise future media plans accordingly.



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Advertising

The airing of campaign messages, or advertisements, by purchasing space in media outlets.

Bonus/Value-Add

Additional air time or “free” placements that a media outlet will give an organization as a result of negotiation on the paid advertising.

Click-Through

The process of clicking on an online advertisement, which then takes you through to the advertiser’s destination, usually a Web site or landing page.

Click-Through Rate (CTR)

The average number of click-throughs per hundred ad impressions, expressed as a percentage.

Cost Per Point (CPP)

The cost to reach 1 percent (or one rating point) of the individuals in a specific market. The cost per point varies by market size, demand, and advertising content.

$$\text{Cost Per Point} = \frac{\text{Schedule Cost}}{\text{Number of Gross Rating Points}}$$

TELEVISION

EM: Early Morning 5 a.m.–9 a.m.
 DT: Daytime 9 a.m.–3 p.m.
 EF: Early Fringe 3 p.m.–5 p.m.
 EN: Early News 5 p.m.–7 p.m.
 PA: Prime Access 7 p.m.–8 p.m.
 PT: Primetime 8 p.m.–11 p.m.
 LN: Late News 11 p.m.–11:30 p.m.
 LF: Late Fringe 11:30 p.m.–2 a.m.

RADIO

AM Drive: 5 a.m.–10 a.m.
 Midday: 10 a.m.–3 p.m.
 PM Drive: 3 p.m.–7 p.m.
 Evenings: 7 p.m.–12 a.m.

Day Part

The time of day when a television or radio ad airs.

Designated Media Market (DMA)

The Nielsen-designated geographic area that is covered by market-specific television stations. Currently there are 210 markets.

“Earned” or “Free” Media

Exposure obtained from a medium as a result of your publicity and lobbying.

Flight Date

The start and end dates of your advertising schedule. Typically, television and radio are purchased on a weekly basis.

Frequency

The potential number of times individuals are exposed to an advertising schedule over a given period of time.

Impressions

(Typically used with online advertising.) The number of times your ad will be seen over the course of the campaign (number of times displayed X number of viewers). If you purchase 500,000 impressions, the ad will be seen 500,000 times over the course of the advertising period.

Gross Rating Points (GRP)

The sum of all ratings. The total ratings of all programs purchased during a given period of time, which come in multiples of 100 (e.g., 100, 500, 1,000). For example, if an organization purchases advertising at 600 GRPs, the average viewer will see the ad 6 times. Gross Rating Points vary by market size and viewing habits, demographic data (such as age and gender), and timing.

Matching Spots

During negotiations, outlets frequently offer discounts in the form of free placements. For example, for every two spots an organization purchases, the media outlet may offer to air, or match, one spot for free.

Proof

A hard copy of a print ad that you review to be sure that the text is correct and the layout and colors are consistent with the electronic version of the print advertisement.

Public Service Announcement (PSA)

A public service message that a media outlet airs free of charge as part of its community service mission. The messages provide information that could significantly affect people's lives in a positive way.

Ratings

The percentage of individuals or audience watching a program in a particular market. For example, a 15-rating = 15 percent of the audience. Ratings vary depending on the age and gender that are being measured.

Reach

The percentage of different individuals exposed to a media schedule during a given period of time.

Sweep Period

Referring to television networks, the months of November and May. Viewer ratings are compiled then, so these are times when networks typically schedule their best programs and run never-before-seen episodes of popular shows, which bring in more viewers.

Tear Sheet

A copy of the ad that ran in the publication, from every publication in which print ads are placed.

Traffic

Rotation of spots during a specific media flight.



A BUNDLE OF RESOURCES

AND INFORMATION



SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP) OUTREACH MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

Informational SNAP Resources Translated into 35 Languages

Five basic SNAP documents have been translated into 35 languages and are easily downloadable for simple copying and distribution. An “I Speak” document is also available which allows a person to indicate to a caseworker or advocate what language he or she speaks so that accommodations can be made.

The following documents are available:

- **Questions and Answers About Getting and Using SNAP, SNAP313** – A brochure that provides useful information about SNAP.
 - **“Public Charge”** – A notice to reassure immigrants that receiving SNAP benefits will not make them public charges, so that it will not affect their immigration status.
 - **“Immigrant Eligibility Questions and Answers”** – A series of facts of interest to immigrants about eligibility for SNAP benefits, based on changes in the 2002 Farm Bill.
 - **“Documents Needed to Apply for SNAP”** – A list (in English and the target language) of documents that may be needed to prove eligibility for SNAP benefits.
 - **“Fact Sheet on Eligibility”** – Ten facts about SNAP for elderly (60 and older) and disabled persons.
- ▶ View and download at www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/translations.htm

“10 Steps to Help You Fill Your Grocery Bag Through the SNAP Program”

This low-literacy flyer outlines 10 steps to follow to apply for SNAP benefits. Also available in Spanish.

- ▶ View and download PDF version: <http://foodstamp.ntis.gov/>.

SNAP Application Envelope

Help potential recipients compile all of the necessary materials to apply for benefits with this handy envelope featuring a checklist of verification documents. Also available in Spanish.

- ▶ Order copies online at <http://foodstamp.ntis.gov/>.

Document number SNAP-02 (comes with SNAP-01, “10 Steps to Help You Fill Your Grocery Bag Through the Food Stamp Program.”)

SNAP Photo Library

Groups are encouraged to download photographs for use in communicating SNAP nutrition education and outreach messages. FNS requests that these pictures be used only for promotion, informational, and educational purposes of a nonprofit nature.

- ▶ Download at www.grande.nal.usda.gov/foodstamp_album.php.
- ▶ Order print-quality files by contacting FNS directly.



“Community Hunger Champions—Helping People Eat Right When Money’s Tight” Video

This eight-minute video introduces influencers at the regional, State and local level to the SNAP Media Campaign, familiarizes viewers with campaign messages, and showcases the important role eligibility workers play in ensuring eligible individuals obtain SNAP benefits. This video is a companion piece to the toolkit and will help eligibility workers and community partners understand how they can work together and utilize the outreach materials developed by FNS.

► [Download video](#)

SNAP Logo Guidelines

The SNAP logo may be applied to program materials used for identification, public notification and awareness, nutrition education, and outreach. The SNAP logo may be used by those administering SNAP, including the 53 State SNAP agencies and their counterparts at the local and county levels, for purposes consistent with SNAP statutes, regulations, and policies. Other organizations, such as non-profit organizations and authorized SNAP retailers engaged in SNAP outreach or nutrition education, may use the SNAP logo for noncommercial educational and outreach purposes when such uses are a public service and contribute to public information and education concerning SNAP. FNS has developed guidelines for using the SNAP logo.

► Download logo guidelines at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/roll-out/logo.pdf>



Supplemental
Nutrition
Assistance
Program

Putting Healthy Food
Within Reach

GENERAL INFORMATION

Main SNAP Web page

www.fns.usda.gov/snap/

A starting point for general information about SNAP.

History of the SNAP Program

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/rules/Legislation/about.htm>

Provides a brief history of SNAP from 1939 to the present.

Legislation, Rules, Waivers, and Certification Policy

http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/government/legislation_rules_cert.htm

Includes a waiver database showing which States have received waivers of sections of SNAP rules for specific purposes or to accommodate local conditions.

USDA Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

www.usda.gov/fbc

Background information about USDA’s initiatives for faith-based and community organizations.

RESEARCH STUDIES

The Office of Research and Analysis (ORA) regularly releases research studies that might prove useful in your outreach efforts. Please visit ORA at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora> to find the latest research and studies issued by the Food and Nutrition Service.



GENERAL SNAP OUTREACH RESOURCES

SNAP COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Main SNAP Outreach Web page

www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/default.htm

A starting point for information about SNAP outreach including information about developing and submitting an optional State SNAP outreach plan for FNS approval; the SNAP outreach coalition; and promising outreach practices.

SNAP Radio PSAs

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cgal/Radio/radio.htm>

A compilation of USDA's SNAP radio public service announcements.

SNAP TV PSAs

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/psas.htm>

Two 30-second video public service announcements (PSAs) in English and Spanish. They are suitable for both TV and in-store broadcast and can also be used in meetings and presentations.

Radio Novelas

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/radio/default.htm>

A compilation of 10 Spanish public service announcements in the form of radio novelas or miniseries.

SNAP Newsletter Article

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/roll-out/newsletter-article.pdf>

A pre-written newsletter article to use in informing your clients of the new SNAP name.

SNAP Newsletter Paragraph

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/roll-out/newsletter-paragraph.pdf>

A pre-written newsletter paragraph to use in informing your clients of the new SNAP name.

OTHER SNAP OUTREACH RESOURCES

SNAP State Policy Guidance

http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/government/certification_policy.htm

FNS provides guidance on implementing program policy to State SNAP agencies through memos to its seven regional offices <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cgal/Contacts/FieldOffices/>. The regional offices distribute the guidance to the State agencies with which they work.

SNAP Outreach Coalition Information

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/default.htm>

A core group of national antihunger advocacy groups, and other groups interested in promoting the health and nutrition benefits of SNAP. These organizations work to end hunger and improve nutrition at the national level through both advocacy and outreach to local antihunger projects.

USDA Grant Information

www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/grants.htm

Information about past and future research grants given by USDA to nonprofit organizations and others to improve access to SNAP by low-income persons and families.

Hunger Champions Information and Applications

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/default.htm>

Established to honor local offices that provide exemplary service in assisting eligible clients to obtain SNAP benefits.

Broad-based Categorical Eligibility

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/rules/Memo/2010/121809.pdf>



SNAP WEB RESOURCES

PRESCREENING AND APPLICATION ASSISTANCE

FNS Prescreening Tool (Step 1)

<http://www.snap-step1.usda.gov/fns/>

This simple, low-literacy online prescreening tool enables users to input their information privately and, based on their information, tells them if they might be eligible for SNAP benefits and how much they might receive.

Links to Downloadable SNAP Applications and Local Office Locators

www.fns.usda.gov/snap/

Features a United States map. Click on a State to find links to that State's downloadable SNAP application, links to local office locators, and list of outreach providers.

Combined Application Project (CAP)

www.fns.usda.gov

As part of FNS' priority to improve access to SNAP, the agency is working in collaboration with regional offices, States and the Social Security Administration (SSA) to increase access to the nutrition benefits offered by SNAP for elderly and disabled populations receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI). The Combined Application Project (CAP) demonstrations make it much easier for the elderly and disabled SSI recipients to receive SNAP benefits by reengineering the SNAP application process and eliminating the need for this population to visit the local SNAP office.

RESEARCH, DATA, AND STATISTICS

SNAP Participation Data

www.fns.usda.gov/oane/MENU/Published/SNAP/participation.htm

Features data and studies about participation in SNAP and the characteristics of households receiving SNAP benefits. Also includes evaluation reports for past FNS outreach grant programs from 1993-1994 (see "Food Stamp Client Enrollment Assistance Demonstration Projects: Final Evaluation Report, July 1999") and 2001 (see "Research Grants to Improve SNAP Access Through Partnerships and Technology: 2001 Program Evaluation Summary – September 2004").

Economic Impact of SNAP Benefits

www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/researchers/ers_reports.htm

www.ers.usda.gov/publications/fanrr26/fanrr26-6/

www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/GeneralEconomy/linkages.htm

Links to studies about the economic benefits of food stamps. The research was conducted by USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS), which is USDA's main source of economic information.

Impact of Food Assistance on Nutrition and Health

www.ers.usda.gov/publications/fanrr19%2D3/

A comprehensive review that compiles and synthesizes published research about the impact of domestic food assistance programs on participants' nutrition and health outcomes. There are several volumes to the report.

United States Census Bureau

www.census.gov

Vast amounts of data on income and poverty levels, including data by county and State.

NUTRITION EDUCATION

SNAP Nutrition Connection

www.nal.usda.gov/foodstamp/

Features resources related to SNAP nutrition education including lists of State and local SNAP nutrition education cooperators ("State Gates").

Eat Smart. Play Hard.™

<http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/eatsmartmaterials.html>

FNS campaign to motivate children to be active and eat healthy. Features fun activities for kids and information for caregivers. Free materials available.

Nutrition Education Resources

<http://snap.nal.usda.gov/>

Links to national SNAP nutrition education resources including guidance for developing an optional State nutrition education plan and submitting it for FNS approval.



SNAP WEB RESOURCES

Success And Challenges In Delivering Nutrition Education To Low Income Older Adults

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/menu/NNEC/Files/Presentations/DeliveringNutEdOlderAdults.pdf>

A PowerPoint presentation advising outreach providers on how to effectively educate low literacy older adults about good nutrition.

INFORMATION FOR RETAILERS

General SNAP Information for Food Retailers

www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailers/default.htm

Main source of information about SNAP for food retailers including information about how to become an authorized retailer, frequently asked questions, and tips for food retailers about outreach.

ORGANIZATIONS SERVING OLDER ADULTS

Please note that this is a sampling of organizations serving older Americans and not a complete list.

The Administration on Aging (AoA)

www.aoa.gov

An agency in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is one of the nation's largest providers of home- and community-based care for older persons and their caregivers. This network, serving about 7 million older persons and their caregivers, consists of 56 State Units on Aging; 655 Area Agencies on Aging; 233 Tribal and Native organizations; two organizations that serve Native Hawaiians; 29,000 service providers; and thousands of volunteers. These organizations provide assistance and services to older individuals and their families in urban, suburban, and rural areas throughout the United States.

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov>

The CMS is a federal agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. CMS runs the Medicare and Medicaid programs - two national health care programs that benefit about 75 million Americans.

Social Security Administration

<http://www.ssa.gov>

The Social Security Administration (SSA) provides retirement and disability benefits to eligible Americans. Retirement benefits start at age 62 and are based on your average earnings during a lifetime of work under the Social Security system. SSA is responsible for two major programs that provide benefits based on disability: Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), which is based on prior work under Social Security, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Under SSI, payments are made on the basis of financial need. SSI disability benefits are payable to adults or children who are disabled or blind, have limited income and resources, meet the living arrangement requirements, and are otherwise eligible. SSDI benefits are payable to blind or disabled workers, widow(er)s, or adults disabled since childhood, who are otherwise eligible.

Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

www.lcao.org

A large coalition of the nation's non-profit organizations serving older Americans. There is a 56 member association which is diverse and dedicated to preserving and strengthening the well-being of America's older population. This national organization advocates on behalf of seniors and their families in the ongoing national debate on aging policy.

National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (N4A)

www.n4a.org

N4A is the umbrella organization for the 655 area agencies on aging (AAAs) and more than 230 Title VI Native American aging programs in the U.S. Through its presence in Washington, D.C., N4A advocates on behalf of the local aging agencies to ensure that needed resources and support services are available to older Americans.

AARP

www.aarp.org

Founded in 1958, AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that helps people 50 and over improve the quality of their lives.



SNAP WEB RESOURCES

National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP)

www.nanasp.org

NANASP is a professional membership organization with members drawn primarily from persons working in or interested in the field of aging, community-based services, and nutrition and the elderly. Founded in the 1970s, NANASP is one of the leadership organizations in that it helps shape national policy, trains service providers, and advocates on behalf of older adults.

National Council on Aging

www.ncoa.org

A non-profit service and advocacy organization. Brings together non-profit organizations, businesses and government to develop creative solutions that improve the lives of all older adults.

BenefitsCheckUp

www.benefitscheckup.org

Developed and maintained by The National Council on Aging (NCOA), BenefitsCheckUp is the nation's most comprehensive Web-based service to screen for benefits programs for seniors with limited income and resources. BenefitsCheckUp helps older adults find and enroll in federal, state, local and private programs that help pay for prescription drugs, utility bills, meals, health care and other needs.

Elder Care Locator

www.eldercare.gov

The Eldercare Locator is a public service of the U.S. Administration on Aging. The Eldercare Locator is the first step to finding resources for older adults in any U.S. community. Just one phone call or Web site visit instantly connects individuals to eldercare resources in their communities.

Community Transportation Association (CTA)

www.ctaa.org

Transportation planning and coordination supported with sufficient investment in transit alternatives can help communities more effectively and efficiently meet the needs of their seniors and ensure their essential place in community life.

Senior Corps, Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)

www.seniorcorps.gov

Senior Corps is a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service, an independent federal agency created to connect Americans of all ages and backgrounds with opportunities to give back to their communities and their nation. Senior Corps offers a network of programs that tap the rich experience, skills and talents of older citizens to meet community challenges. Among these programs is the Senior Companion Program which brings together volunteers age 55 and over with adults in their community who have difficulty with the simple tasks of day-to-day living. Companions help out on a personal level by assisting with shopping and light chores, interacting with doctors, or just making a friendly visit.

ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Meals on Wheels Association of America (MOWAA)

www.mowaa.org

MOWAA represents those who provide congregate and home-delivered meals services to people in need. Most members are executive directors, Registered or Licensed Dietitians, volunteer coordinators, or nutrition directors at Meals On Wheels and congregate programs. Membership in MOWAA is diverse.

Families USA

www.familiesusa.org

A national nonprofit, non-partisan organization dedicated to the achievement of high-quality, affordable health care for all Americans.



FOOTNOTES FROM INTRODUCTION

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FOOTNOTES FROM INTRODUCTION

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www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach